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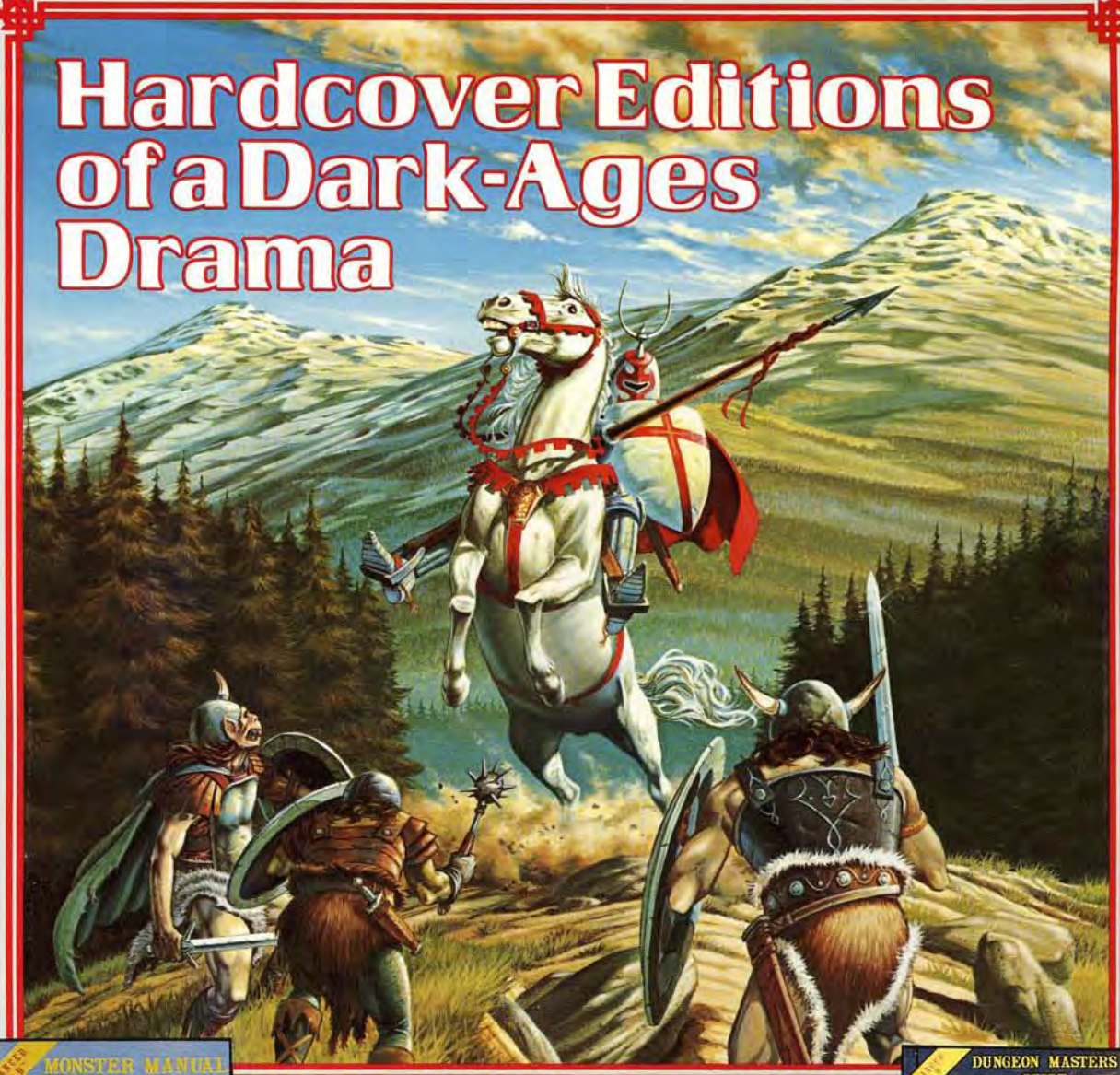

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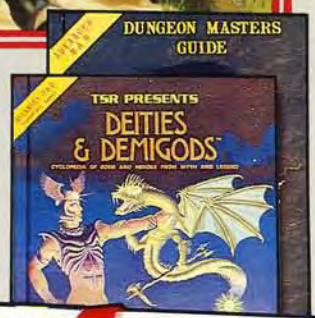

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IMAGINE™

No. 5 August 1983

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Editorial

An advantage of being the person who typesets much of this magazine is that one has the opportunity to sneak in something just before it is sent off to the printer — so I've taken over the editorial column!

First I must offer an apology on behalf of the men. The lack of text on the Steve Jackson Games advertisement for Flying Buffalo on page 30 of # 3 was entirely the fault of this magazine. You will find it in full on page 29 of this issue. Our apologies to Flying Buffalo; we hope they forgive us.

One reader took exception to the 'platitudinous' idea in the Editorial of # 3 — taking our comment out of context, I might add — that we should try not to offend anyone. The context was sex, so this month let's talk about sex. The *female* sex,....

A woman coming fresh to this hobby feels somewhat excluded. Women *are* provided for in TSR's games rules (the USA being more sex-egalitarian than the UK), but the language belies the truth — look at 'Dungeon/Games *Master*', and all the *him*- and *his*-ing that goes on in the articles we receive. Merely a convention of speech, you may say — but if that's true then why are articles about nurses, secretaries and teachers full of *she* and *her*? No doubt about it, your average gamer is expected to be male. And it's clear that most gamers *are*: attend any convention, visit any club or hobby shop, and most of those present will be male.

But why should this be? Perhaps it stems from the roots in wargames. War is traditionally a man's game, so it follows that the simulation of war is, too. There's a theory in sociological circles that war only becomes acceptable while the women remain at home to be 'defended'.... However, if wargamers are mostly pacific people, as Don Turnbull asserted last month, such considerations should not be prohibitive to women. And if, as common mythology has it, women are artful and cunning dissemblers, then surely we should be good tacticians and role-players?

Eureka! I get it — women must be excluded from gaming because otherwise we might beat men at that game too. It's obvious!

Kim Daniel

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THE BEGINNERS' GUIDE

Mordrex returned the crystal ball to his backpack, and turned to his companions. 'It is as we suspected. Yonder cave is the lair of the white dragon. It is sleeping, but we must move fast to catch it unawares.'

Shortly afterwards, Mordrex was soaring towards the cave mouth as the others climbed over the broken boulders leading to the cave. Satisfied that his companions were ready, Mordrex turned himself invisible and flew into the cave. At first he could not see and came close to flying into a stalactite. Soon his eyes grew accustomed to the dim eerie light coming from the luminescent fungi that grew around the cave.

Ahead he could see twenty-odd feet of white worm coiled around a mound of treasure. Carefully he hovered near the ceiling and cast his Shield spell. His companions burst into the cave shouting and yelling.

His heart beat fast. He prayed that the dragon would not look his way. Even invisible he felt very vulnerable. He let out a sigh of relief as it headed towards the entrance. He moved his arms and chanted to summon power from another plane. His finger pointed and a glowing red marble shot forth and sped towards the dragon. Before it reached the dragon it exploded with a deafening roar as flames shot out in a forty feet diameter ball of fire.

The dragon let out a roar of rage. Its head turned from side to side seeking out the culprit who had scorched its hide. Their eyes met, the dragon's wings flapped as it launched itself into the air towards him. Mordrex raised his finger and streaks of light sped towards the dragon.

'This'd better work,' he muttered. 'Another ten feet and he'll breathe.'

Mordrex's Magic Missiles hit the dragon but it kept on coming. Its mouth opened. Desperately he tried to fly past the dragon. Its head turned and he saw the frosty breath rising in its throat.

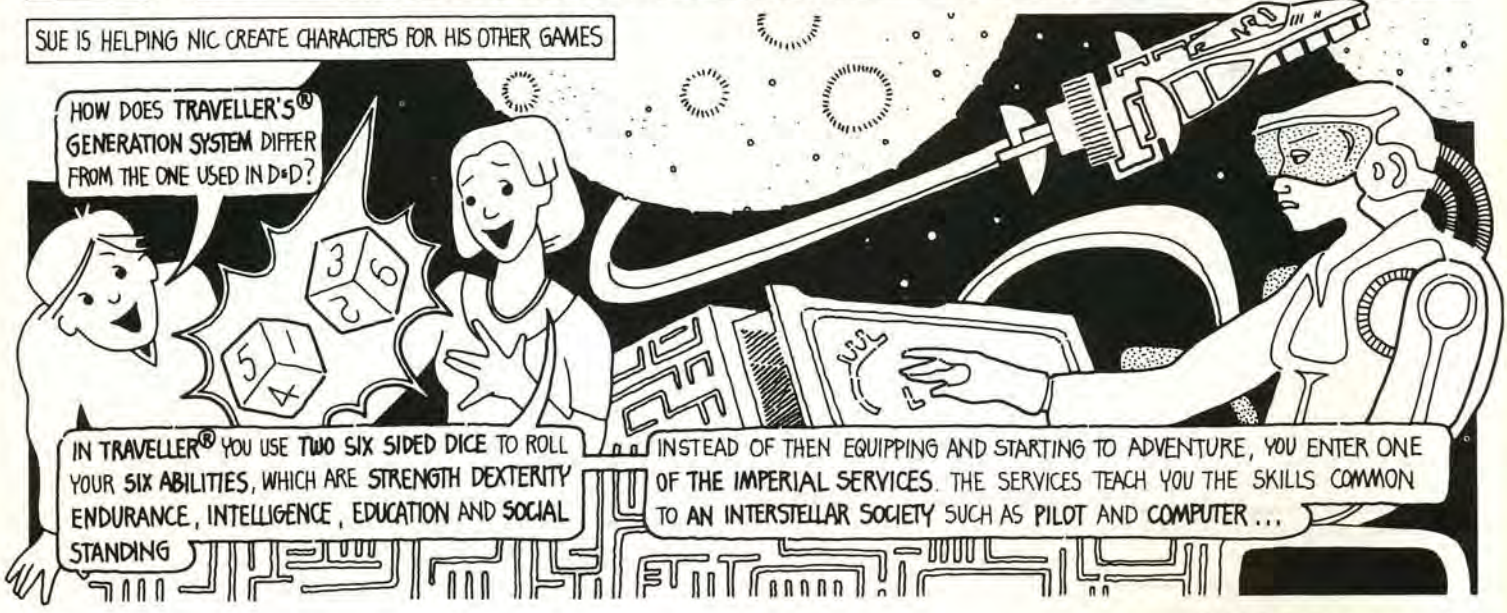
Suddenly the dragon twitched. It clawed the air spasmodically and crashed to the ground with two arrows firmly lodged in its throat. With a sigh of relief Mordrex flew down to the others and together they approached the dragon's hoard.

Sorcerous incantations and mysterious arcane passes are the stock in trade of the magic-user. Fantasy literature abounds with powerful wizards working mighty magics for both good and evil purposes. Players of fantasy role-playing games can share the experience of the Merlin-like sages of the past in many different adventures.

The above adventure took place during such a game. Sue, the referee or Games Master, has created the setting and runs the game with reference to the rules. The other players each take the role of a fictional person, like an actor taking on the part of a character in a play. Graham is playing Mordrex, a powerful magic-user, Jane and Pat are fighters and John, a cleric. The party is looking for a white dragon who has been terrorising nearby villages and carrying off the occasional helpless victim. They have travelled into the mountains and have stopped near a cave.

Graham — 'I'll get out my crystal ball and use it to look in the cave.'

THE ADVENTURES OF NIC NOVICE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Sue — 'It is dark in there but after a while you make out a large white shape lying on top of a mound of treasure. The dragon looks fast asleep.'

Graham — 'We need a plan. We have got to draw the dragon away from the treasure before I can **fireball** it or else it will all be melted. Any ideas?'

The players spend a few moments discussing the best way to tackle the dragon.

Pat — 'We'll move carefully up to the cave mouth. Once there we will try to attract the dragon by making a lot of noise.'

Graham — 'As they move up I'll cast my **fly** spell and fly towards the cave. Before I go in I'll turn myself invisible.'

Sue — 'As you fly into the cave the darkness restricts your vision until your eyes can adjust. Suddenly you see an object loom up in front of you.'

Graham — 'I'll try to avoid it.'

Sue — 'Okay. Roll a die.'

Graham rolls and successfully avoids flying into the stalactite.

Graham — 'I fly lower. Can I see the dragon yet?'

Sue — 'Yes. Your eyes are becoming accustomed to the semi-darkness. The dragon is still sleeping on its hoard.'

Graham — 'I fly up to the ceiling and cast my **shield** spell.'

Sue — 'You hear your companions shouting. The dragon wakes and moves towards them.'

Graham — 'When it has moved at least thirty feet from its hoard I'll cast my fireball at it.'

Graham rolls six dice for damage and Sue makes a saving throw for the dragon to see if it can avoid the full blast of the spell. The dragon fails.

Sue — 'The dragon howls and looks around the cave. Casting the fireball has cancelled your invisibility and it sees you.'

Graham — 'I cast **magic missiles** at it.'

Graham rolls his damage but fails to kill the dragon. It launches itself into the air towards him.

Sue — 'The dragon is closing in on you, rapidly, preparing to use its breath weapon.'

Graham — 'I'll try and fly out of the cave.'

Pat — 'I'm going to fire arrows at the dragon.'

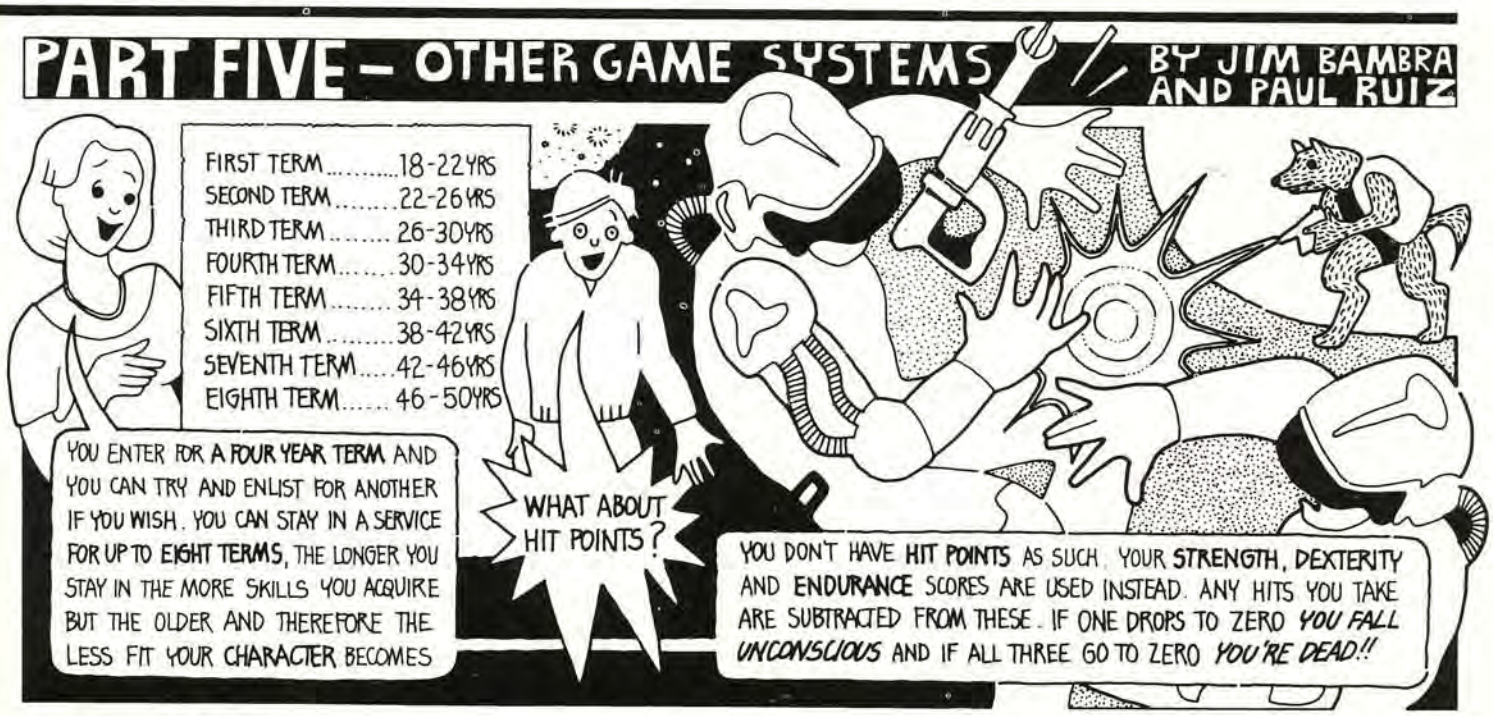
Jane — 'So will I.'

Pat wins the initiative roll and she and Jane fire their arrows. They both hit and they roll for the damage inflicted on the dragon.

Sue — 'Your arrows thud into the dragon's neck, it writhes in agony as it crashes down to the floor.'

Graham — 'Phew. That was close!'

Pat — 'Let's check out its hoard.'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YOU DON'T HAVE HIT POINTS AS SUCH. YOUR STRENGTH, DEXTERITY AND ENDURANCE SCORES ARE USED INSTEAD. ANY HITS YOU TAKE ARE SUBTRACTED FROM THESE. IF ONE DROPS TO ZERO YOU FALL UNCONSCIOUS AND IF ALL THREE GO TO ZERO YOU'RE DEAD!!

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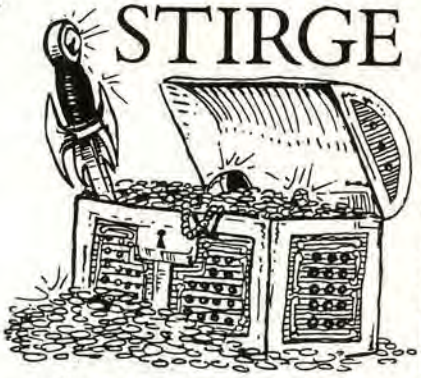

A bottle of mercury suspended from a hook in the ceiling.... of absolutely no significance, of course, but likely to worry the players!

A page for the not-so-experienced adventurer

by Roger Musson

There are some things about the D&D® game which you rarely see mentioned in print, for the reason that they are so obvious to the experienced player as to be taken for granted. For the inexperienced player, though, they may be less obvious.

One such is this: there are two sorts of dungeon, and they tend to give quite different games. Furthermore, almost all published dungeons, either in magazines or stand-alone modules, fall into only one category. This first category is what one can call the 'adventure' dungeon. Characteristically, such a dungeon will be fairly small, with probably less than a hundred rooms in total. It will be tightly organised around its theme — say, the underground temple of an evil cult. There will be much detail, all of which will be relevant to the central theme. Often, the players will have a specific objective — say the rescuing of a captive, or the finding of a particular artifact. Also, the adventure will be designed for a certain number of characters of a certain restricted range of levels — so you may see phrases like 'suitable for six players, levels 7-9' used in the introduction.

Final showdown

Also characteristic of the adventure dungeon is an easily-definable 'centre' — usually the room occupied by the Evil High Priest or Wizard or whoever controls the other inhabitants of the dungeon, and who has custody of the big treasure. The objective given to the players will almost invariably bring them into a final showdown with this controlling character. Probably, the whole scenario will be concluded in one or two sessions of play, whereupon the players will have to find another dungeon to tackle, another scenario to play.

Very different is the dungeon of the second type, which I will call the 'main' dungeon. (I rather like to think of it as a 'mainframe' dungeon, a computer metaphor.) The main dungeon will be big — typically ten or twelve levels of one or two hundred rooms *each*. This can take an awful lot of punishment from players. Once all the labour of creating it has been completed, the DM can look forward to many, many sessions of play. Also, of course, a main dungeon is suitable for any number of characters of any level. A small party of low-level characters will stick to first level and hunt kobolds; a larger, stronger party will be able to venture deeper; while a party of high-level characters will descend to the depths and mix it with the vampires and golems.

This makes the main dungeon very convenient for sustained play, and so it is the sort of dungeon most DMs design for themselves. But despite the frequency of such dungeons in play, you are not likely to see such things in print, on account of their size. Even the sample dungeon on pp94-6 of the **Dungeon Masters Guide** is, from its size and layout, evidently part of an adventure dungeon. Main dungeons usually have a much higher density of rooms per unit area than the map on p95, which shows many corridors without rooms off. In most main dungeons I have seen, the rooms tend to be fairly close-packed, partly in order to get them all on one sheet of graph paper per level. Similarly, the random dungeon generation tables in appendix A of the DMG tend to give layouts approximating to the adventure dungeon variety, with a low number of rooms and inhabitants.

Inventive powers

The disadvantage of the main dungeon is that it is very difficult, if not actually impossible, to sustain one's inventive powers for upwards of 1,500 or even 2,000 rooms on a common theme. In an adventure dungeon every room will have a purpose of some sort, or at the very least will be relevant to the theme. In designing a main dungeon, even after you have put in the Wizard's headquarters, and the orc encampment, and the catacombs of the undead, you will find you still have a lot of rooms to fill with something, and eventually one succumbs to the temptation to put in purely decorative features — things like a room containing a bottle of mercury suspended by a wire from a hook in the ceiling. Of absolutely no significance, of course, but quite likely to worry players out of all proportion.

This is another reason why you tend not to see main dungeons in print — they are never entirely sensible, or of even quality. Adventure dungeons are much more 'realistic' — much more like underground adventures in Tolkien, Donaldson et al. They tend to be much more demanding on DM and players alike than games set in a main dungeon.

Dungeon-bashing

The main dungeon encourages an activity known as dungeon-bashing. Go down, kill some monsters, grab some treasure, come back, then repeat the exercise all over again. There is much scorn poured on dungeon-bashing. It resembles nothing in life, history and literature. It is certainly not role-playing at its best. There is nothing much like it even in other role-playing games, which tend to run exclusively on adventure lines. But do not let that put you off. Dungeon-bashing can still be very entertaining in a well designed dungeon. As long as the routine is not too monotonous it can be quite a relaxing pastime! And of course, the good DM will always make sure that there is enough going on to keep the players on their toes.

Roger Musson

If you find this feature useful in gaining an appreciation of role-playing, please note that back issues of IMAGINE™ magazine, with previous editions of ***Stirge Corner*** *are available for £1.50 from TSR.*

chronicle

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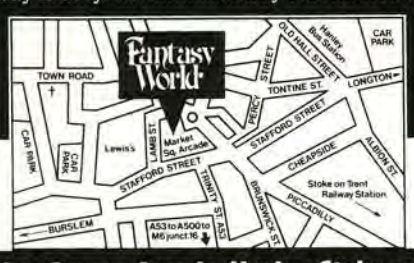

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IN A CLASS OF THEIR OWN

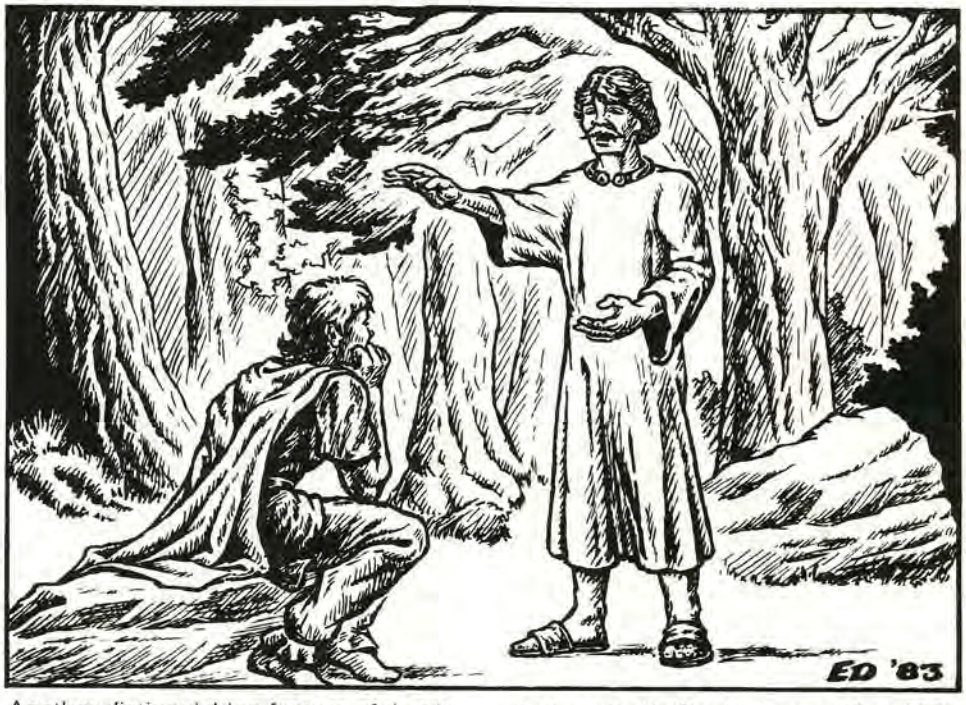
Chris Black investigates the historical background to the **druid** character class

Druids seem to be the least popular character class — they are seldom chosen as player-characters and rarely appear as NPCs in published modules — and perhaps the general opinion is that they are a poorly armoured type of cleric, useless against undead and poorly adapted to dungeons. So it is about time somebody wrote of the finer side of druids and why at least one person thinks they are the best class of all....

I have played two druids myself. The first was Fencesitter, who had excellent charisma and wisdom, but an intelligence of 9 and strength of 7. Fencesitter never did anything spectacular but doggedly made his way to third level in a campaign where low level characters had a very dangerous time. He did, however, become involved in a long-running conflict between two other player-characters — Schrodinger, a terrifying ninth level assassin, and Herucleum Mantegazzianum, a seventh level druid. It was Herucleum that I held in awe. Whenever a party ventured into the plains it was Herucleum who summoned wild horses for the group to ride. It was Herucleum who infected Schrodinger's house with malaria-carrying mosquitoes, who fire-trapped his front door and who threatened to strike him with up to 49 7d8 lightning bolts. Who else but he could psionically dominate a hill giant whilst in the shape of a gecko? I longed to have a character like Herucleum and my chance came with Radwinter Apphockeril, an impressive half-elf who survived countless bloody conflicts, finally reaching eighth level, before a recent encounter with a spectre somewhat reduced his powers.

The seventh level druid is a superb all-rounder; a capable fighter, a great healer, a shape-changer, a mighty weaver of spells, and a sage of languages and nature. Yet this can be achieved with only 35,001xp (less with an experience bonus) — 7500 lower than is required for the next easiest class, the thief.

The first level druid is, naturally, a much humbler character; 1d8 hit points, AC 7, with only two first level spells, and no curing abilities. Nevertheless, this druid should be able to outfight a first level assassin, thief, magic-user or monk, and some of the first level spells — especially **animal friendship**, **entangle** and **faerie fire** — are quite useful. Compared with the 1d4, AC 10 magic-user ('I've cast my **magic missile**, what can I do for the rest of the adventure?') or the 1d6, AC 8 thief ('Let's see, I have a 20% chance of removing traps, oh dear I've failed again'), the druid seems quite capable. Perhaps the only weak point of the druid is that one needs 2000xp to reach second level, a higher figure than for thieves, assassins and clerics.



Another distinguishing feature of druids is that they are the only class presented with a thorough cultural background. Whether you regard this as an advantage, a handicap or an irrelevance depends on how you play. It at least provides each druid with two goals in life — to act as a protector of the environment and to become The Great Druid. In the rest of this article I shall compare Advanced druids with their historical counterparts and offer my own suggestion on how to play and referee them.

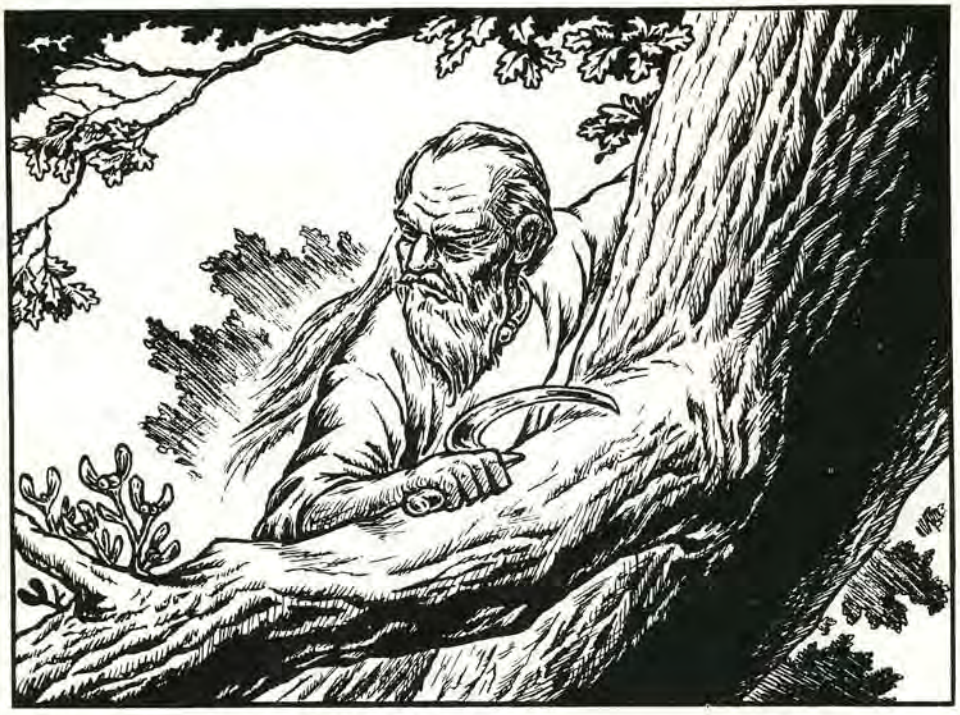
Historical evidence of druids — setting them in context

We can begin by defining the Celts as an ancient people who inhabited a large area stretching from the British Isles across Europe into Galatia (part of modern Turkey — the Galatians of the New Testament were Celts). The druids were a Celtic priesthood who certainly existed in the British Isles and Gaul (ancient France, southern Holland, Belgium, Germany west of the Rhine and most of Switzerland) and may have been found elsewhere.

The Celts did not have their own alphabet and written language, and so we do not have any accounts of Druidism actually written by a druid. Evidence of the Druidic way of life comes from three less direct sources. Firstly, there are the archaeological remains of shrines, burial shafts, forts, dwellings and other sites. Inscriptions can often be found, with Celtic words written in the Latin or Greek alphabet. Secondly, there are the writings on the Celts by the classical authors, notably the Syrian Greek Posidonius (c 135 - c 50BC) who travelled in Gaul between 58 and 50 BC. Thirdly, there are the traditional Irish tales, orally transmitted down the generations from the fourth century after Christ until recorded by Christian scribes.

It is difficult to interpret the available evidence correctly. Archaeological discoveries can reveal much of Celtic technology and economics but social structure and religious behaviour are much harder to examine. For example, there are numerous sites where four post-holes have been found, forming the corners of a square between five and eight feet across. British archaeologists have regarded them as being granaries on stilts, whereas on the Continent they are considered to be small timber shrines (the sort of thing that Advanced druids might make for themselves). The classical sources contradict the Irish sources which might be expected because they deal with different countries, in different centuries, but they also contradict each other. In any case, the total original information on druids is not very great; in a 200 page book, Caesar devotes about three pages to them, and as his writings were partly political propaganda, he can hardly be trusted to give an objective account anyway.

Another hazard for those studying druids is the mish-mash of phoney Folk lore, a sort of Druidomania, that arose in the 17th century. A whole series of totally mistaken theories were offered about them: that they had built and used Stonehenge as a temple, that they were descended from Noah, that they had universities throughout the West of England, — that, in fact, apart from the occasional bloody sacrifice, they behaved as perfect country gentlemen.



Comparing the AD&D druid with the historical figure

The druid character class, as described in the **Players Handbook** and DEITIES & DEMIGODS™ Cyclopaedia, is reasonably well based on the ancient original, as a point-by-point comparison shows:

Function:
The druids, bards and vates formed a high-ranking class of non-combatants, exempt from taxes and military duty. The bards were singers and poets, responsible for speaking or singing at ceremonies and entertainments. The vates were probably seers, responsible for the interpretation of sacrifices. Druids seemed to have had a wide range of duties, acting as judges in everything from murders to boundary disputes, as advisers on all matters supernatural, legal or practical (eg the maintenance of calendars), as the supervisors of sacrifices and other religious ceremonies, and finally, as teachers to the younger druids.

Affinity with nature:
The Celts held several species, including the oak, as sacred, and indeed the word 'druid' probably derives from the Greek for 'knowledge of the oak.' The only detailed account of a druidic ceremony actually does tell of a druid in a white robe climbing an oak tree and using a golden sickle to cut off a branch of mistletoe, which was caught on a white cloak. The really interesting point is that a golden sickle would have been too soft to cut through a mistletoe stem.... unless it were magic....

Third and seventh level druid powers:
These fit reasonably well with the original. The ancient druids probably could identify plants, animals and pure water, and be skilled in traversing overgrown forest areas. There are indeed some Irish tales of shape-changing, including one in which a druid allows himself to be sacrificed in the form of a cow to help his people win a forthcoming battle.

The Great Druid:
The evidence for a formal leader is just a few words from Caesar:

> *'All the druids are under one head, whom they hold in the highest respect. On his death, if any one of the rest is of outstanding merit, he succeeds to the vacant place. If several have equal claims, the Druids usually decide the election by voting, though sometimes they actually fight it out.'*

Druids as Spell Casters:
The druids of Britain and Gaul apparently seldom cast spells (maybe they don't work in real life), but the writer Pliny recorded that they worked charms with mistletoe and in their last stand on Anglesey in 78AD, they ritually cursed the Roman army.

The archaeology of druidic shrines and pits:
The general pattern was of enclosed sanctuaries and small wooden temples, often deep within the forest. A typical design of a site might be circular or rectangular, about 450 feet across, and surrounded by ditches. It could be a permanent dwelling place, with perhaps a dozen timber houses at the centre and a shrine at one side, or it might just be a sacred enclosure, with a shrine, ritual pits (up to 120 feet deep, and containing vast amounts of jewelry, cauldrons or other items given as sacred offerings), large stones, cremation areas and burial sites and sacred springs or pools.

Bronze, stone or wooden statues might be found as well. As for sacrifices, at Holzhausen in Bavaria, a 25 feet deep pit contained a wooden stake, set upright in the bottom, with the possible residues of blood and flesh around it.... Religious inscriptions might also be found (over 370 Celtic god-names have been recorded).

Playing and refereeing the druid

A druid's behaviour very much depends on the cultural background of the campaign. If it is set in the usual High Medieval period, then a druid will stick out like a sore thumb. The character would have to be played as one of the few survivors of an almost vanished race, in exile from a distant land, or just someone who became curious about an ancient cult (think of the hippies attracted to Eastern mysticism in the late '60s!). These druids will be treated with extreme suspicion and prejudice; respectable inns will turn them away and normal employment will be unavailable, so that they have to live in the woods as adventurers. Alternatively, if the campaign has a Celtic feeling then the druid will have a high social standing and hold a position of authority.

We all know that druids must hold True Neutral alignment and that this is described in the **Players' Handbook** and the DEITIES & DEMIGODS™ Cyclopedia, but druids should think of practical matters rather than theology. Their neutrality should emphasise that druids don't worry about good and evil, law and chaos, when protecting their crops and woodlands. At other times druids should behave according to their personality; if a druid spends the afternoon casting **cure disease** spells on sick villagers, he doesn't have to spend the evening burgling the village smithy just to balance out good and evil. The Celtic deities are very tolerant of their priests, provided that the protection of nature remains their first concern.

Exactly how rigorously trees should be protected is something that should be discussed with your DM. A typical druid would not allow Oak or Ash to be used for anything but sacred purposes whilst other selected trees might be felled for everyday items. Firewood would be collected from dead branches and a replanting policy would be strictly followed. Nevertheless, the casual squandering of any tree should be fiercely opposed, even if it means taking on the rest of your party single-handed. For example, Radwinter's party were once stranded on a desert island with only one palm tree growing there, He was trying to work out a complicated method of escape, involving casting **water breathing** on two characters and turning himself into a seal, when a fighter in the party produced an axe and called out 'Let's chop down the tree and make a raft.' 'Oh no you're not,' replied Radwinter and he jabbed the fighter with a scimitar. Unfortunately, a magic-user cast **hold person** on Radwinter and the tree was chopped down. Even so, my druid got his revenge — the

very next time the fighter asked for healing he received **cause light wounds** instead....

As already stated, first level druids are not particularly impressive characters. Even so, a first level druid with a scimitar compares surprisingly well with a first level fighter with a longsword. Whilst the fighter does better against opponents with AC 5 or better, the druid is actually slightly superior against AC 8 and AC 10. Of course, the druid has a mediocre armour class and should only step into melee when the fighters need help and the druid cannot use missiles.

Druids can only choose two weapons at first level, and cannot choose again until sixth level — so this initial selection is vitally important. The **shillelagh** spell is useless unless a club is picked as one of the weapons, but the spell is not very useful anyway and so I would choose either sling or dart as a long-distance weapon, together with hammer, scimitar or spear for melee combat. The scimitar does most damage, but a first level character can only hit AC 2 with a hammer or spear.

The frustrating thing about druidic spells, especially at first level, is that you always seem to make the wrong choice. Choose **invisibility to animals** and **speak to animals**, and you will find the dungeon will not contain a single normal creature; take anything else and you will not be able to move for guard dogs and rats. For this reason alone, I urge you to choose **faerie fire** and **detect magic**, which will find a use in the most peculiar of dungeons. **Faerie fire** is probably the most useful first level spell, it is quick, verbal, handy against anything about to go invisible, and improves tremendously as one rises in level. **Animal friendship** is a spell to use as preparation for an adventure: a wild horse or war dog is a useful ally. A second level druid should consider training a black bear — they are agile pack animals and decent fighters.

My favourite spell of all is **hallucinatory forest**. Although obviously designed for use in rural surroundings, it is extremely entertaining when cast underground! When a pair of wandering orcs amble through a dungeon corridor into a patch of woodland they are bound to be suspicious (especially if it was not there 20 minutes before). But the hallucinatory forest looks, feels and smells like a real forest and so it is not fair to blame them if they walk into an ambush... The spell lasts permanently, so in time a druid can cover an entire dungeon (or city, or six-lane highway).

At long last the day will come when your druid reaches seventh level. With bated breath you turn to the DM and say 'I want to do a shape change... I want to change into a great crested grebe!' At this point the DM has to bear several questions in mind, such as 'Does the druid change form instantaneously?', 'Can the druid still speak human languages?' and 'how many hit points does the druid have when transformed into another creature?' These matters are really for DMs to decide for themselves; my DM makes the shape change take one melee round; allows the druid to understand human speech but to speak only the appropriate creature language; and gives my druid the maximum number of hit points that such a creature could have (I do not do an aerial reconnaissance as a blackbird if there are hawks around).

Radwinter usually changes into the same few species. A bat is useful for dungeon scouting, as the echo location system allows detection of even invisible creatures and does not need light at all. A gecko is a useful reptile because it can climb walls and walk upside down along ceilings. For more violent endeavours, try the crocodile! As for the birds, try convincing your DM that you can turn into a chicken and lay eggs for breakfast....

There are plenty of other possibilities for creative play and I offer some suggestions for each player or DM to consider:

Building a dwelling and creating a sacred grove with the help of magic. Something to consider for the high-level druid. Summon a treant to herd trees into a suitable arrangement. Use **plant growth** to create a barrier. If stone has to be transported a long distance, **transmute** rock into mud, carry it to the site, transmute the mud back to rock and then **stone shape** the rock into a dwelling.

Arranging sacrifices. Druids should make regular human sacrifices, with criminals preferred as victims. An attack on thieves or Assassins' Guilds to collect a few victims would certainly be a challenge.

Vates as a type of druid. These could be a useful sub-class of druid for a DM to devise, as a deployable NPC.

Druids as guerilla fighters. A whole campaign could be based around the efforts of a few druids to drive some invaders out of a forest.

As a final suggestion, try visiting the supermarket at Carnac in Brittany where there are stone alignments mistakenly associated with druids. There is nothing better than carrying your gear in a carrier bag marked 'Supermarche des Druides'!

Chris Black

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Druid Spells

New, official spells for the **druid** *character class, by* **Gary Gygax**

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Detect Poison (Divination)

Level: *1*
Range: *0*
Duration: *1 round/level*
Area of Effect: *Special*
Components: *V, S, M*
Casting Time: *1 round*
Saving Throw: *None*

By means of this spell the druid is able to determine if some object, creature, or area contains poison or has been poisoned. In general, the area which can be perused by the dweomer of the spell is about 1 cubic yard of space. Therefore the druid cannot determine if an entire pond is poisoned, but could tell if a portion — or something within the portion — scanned during the round contained poison. There is also a 5% chance per level of experience that the type of poison used or contained in the area scanned will also be discovered by the spell, ie insinuative (contact poison), ingestive, or respirative (gas).

While more than one area can be scanned with a *detect poison* during the duration of the spell, it is almost fruitless to attempt to determine poison type for all of those same areas; any single failure on the '5% chance per level' roll to detect poison type makes the spell useless for this purpose for the rest of the duration of this particular casting.

In addition to mistletoe, the druid needs a yew leaf as a material component for this spell. The latter item will turn brown if poison is present, so that several will be needed to fully utilise the entire spell duration.

Precipitation (Alteration)

Level: *1*
Range: *1"/level*
Duration: *1 segment/level*
Area of effect: *3" d. cylinder up to 12" high*
Components: *V, S, M*
Casting Time: *3 segments*
Saving Throw: *None (& special)*

When this spell is cast, all water vapour in the atmosphere in the area of effect is precipitated in the form of a light rain (note that low-level casters will certainly be within the area of effect of the spell). The rain will continue only for as many segments of time as the spell caster has levels of experience. Since only about 1/100th of an inch of precipitation falls during the course of a segment, the spell will have only the following general effects:

Thin, light material will become damp in one segment and thoroughly wet thereafter.

Twigs and heavy material such as canvas will be damp in 2 segments and wet thereafter.

Flat, relatively non-porous surfaces, such as stone floors, rock, painted wood etc, will be damp in 1 segment and filmed with water thereafter.

Semi-porous surfaces and materials will become damp on the surface in 2 segments, and thereafter the damp area will progress downward and/or inward accordingly, while after 5 segments the surface will also be wet.

Porous surfaces and materials will simply absorb the rain to their entire capacity — probably well beyond that of the spell's duration.

Small flames, such as those of candles, will be extinguished by 1 segment of precipitation. Small fires will slow and become smoky for 1 round after precipitation has ceased. Large fires will not be materially affected by the spell.

Lightning cannot be called by the use of this spell. Tracking is impossible within the area of effect immediately after *precipitation* has fallen.

Note that if the temperature is above 90°F, the duration of the spell will be extended to twice normal except in arid regions. Also, where the temperature is between 33° and 31°F inclusive, the *precipitation* will fall in the form of sleet. At 30°F and below, the *precipitation* will fall as rather thick snow, and most dampness/wetness effects will be negated until after the snow melts. If magical heat of large area is applied to *precipitation* (ie a *wall of fire, fireball, flame strike*, etc), a cloud of warm fog of double the area of the *precipitation* effect will be formed. If magical cold is applied to the spell or the water which remains thereafter, normal ice will be formed. Very hot creatures such as salamanders will suffer 1 point of damage for every segment they are within the area of effect of the spell. Such creatures are entitled to save vs magic.

The material components of the spell are a pinch of silver dust and the druid's sprig of mistletoe.

Flame Blade (Evocation)

Level: *2*
Range: *0*
Duration: *1 round/level*
Area of Effect: *3' long, sword-like blade*
Components: *V, S, M*
Casting Time: *3 segments*
Saving Throw: *None*

When casting this spell, the druid causes a blazing ray of red-hot fire to spring from the hand. This blade-like ray is actually wielded as if it were a scimitar, and if the druid scores a successful 'to hit' die roll while employing a *flame blade*, the creature struck will take 5-8 hit points of damage — with a damage bonus of +2 if the creature is of the *undead* class or is vulnerable to fire, or a -2 penalty to damage if the creature is protected from fire. No damage can be caused to a creature which is a fire-dweller or uses fire as an attack form. The *flame blade* will ignite normally combustible materials such as parchment, straw, dry sticks, cloth etc. However, it is not a magical weapon in the normal sense of the term except with respect to *undead* class monsters, so creatures that can be struck only by magical weapons are not harmed by this spell unless they are of the *undead* class.

In addition to mistletoe, the druid must have a leaf of sumac in order to cast this spell.

Goodberry (Alteration/Evocation) Reversible

Level: *2*
Range: *Touch*
Duration: *1 day +1 day/ level of the caster*
Area of effect: *2-8 fresh berries*
Components: *V, S, M*
Casting Time: *1 round*
Saving Throw: *None*

When a druid casts a *goodberry* spell upon a handful of freshly picked berries, from 2 to 8 of them will become magical. The druid casting the spell (as well as any other druid of 3rd or higher level) will be able to discern immediately which berries were affected. A *detect magic* will discover this also. Berries with the dweomer will either enable a hungry creature of approximately man-size to eat one and be as well-nourished as if a full normal

meal were eaten, or else the berry will cure 1 point of physical damage due to wounds or other similar causes, subject to a maximum of 8 points of such curing in any 24-hour period. The reverse of the spell, *badberry*, causes rotten berries to appear wholesome but each actually delivers 1 point of poison damage, no saving throw, if ingested.

The material component of the spell is mistletoe passed over the freshly picked berries to be enspelled (blueberries, blackberries, raspberries, currants, gooseberries, etc).

Reflecting Pool (Evocation-Divination)

Level: *2*
Range: *1"*
Duration: *1 round/level*
Area of Effect: *Special*
Components: *V,S,M*
Casting Time: *2 hours*
Saving Throw: *None*

This spell enables the druid to cause a pool of normal water found in a natural setting to act as a scrying device. The pool can be of no greater diameter than a 2'/level of the druid concerned. The effect is to create a scrying device similar to a *crystal ball*. (See the **Dungeon Masters Guide**, Miscellaneous Magic Treasure section, under *crystal ball*.) The scrying can extend only to those planes of existence which are co-existent with or border upon the Prime Material Plane, viz the Inner Planes (including the Para-Elemental Planes, Plane of Shadow, *et al*). Penalties for attempting to scry beyond the druid's own plane, as shown for the *crystal ball*, are applicable.

The druid must use both mistletoe and the oil extracted from such nuts as hickory and walnut, refined, and dropped in three measures upon the surface of the pool (a measure need be no more than a single ounce of oil).

Slow Poison (Necromantic)

Level: *2*
Range: *Touch*
Duration: *1 hour/level*
Area of effect: *Creature touched*
Components: *V, S, M*
Casting Time: *1 segment*
Saving throw: *None*

This spell is identical to the second level cleric spell, *slow poison* (q.v.), except that if the druid is able to determine that the poison was one made from some living plant, he or she has a 5% chance of knowing a herbal antidote which will neutralize the toxin. (If the actual type of poison is not given by the DM, a successful casting of *detect poison* (type) indicates an organic poison which can be countered.) A dice roll equal to or less than the druid's chance to find an antidote indicates successful neutralisation.

Rather than a holy/unholy symbol, the druid uses mistletoe as a material component, and crushed garlic is rubbed on the subject's feet. Antidotes must be obtained from green vegetation outdoors or from a herbalist or similar source of supply.

Cloudburst (Alteration)

Level: *3*
Range: *1" /level*
Duration: *1 round*
Area of Effect: *3" d. cylinder up to 6" high*
Components: *V, S, M*
Casting Time: *5 segments*
Saving Throw: *None (& special)*

By means of this spell the caster causes the atmosphere instantly to precipitate all its water vapour into huge drops of rain, the resulting condensation not only causing a true downpour of rain but also sucking more vapour into the area to be likewise precipitated as rain. The *cloudburst* will effectively drench everything within its area of effect in 1 segment, for its rain will fall at the rate of 1/10th of an inch per segment, or one inch of rain in 1 round. (Cf *precipitation* spell.)

All normal fires within the area of effect will be extinguished by a *cloudburst* — small ones instantly, medium ones in 3-5 segments, large ones in 8-10 segments. Magical fires will also be extinguished by a *cloudburst*, with the following general rules applying: Permanent magical fires will re-light in 1-2 rounds. Small, rekindlable magic fires such as that of a *flame tongue* sword will be affected only during the *cloudburst*. Spells such as *produce fire* and *burning hands* will be negated.

Large-area spells such as *fireball, flame strike, wall of fire*, etc will, in the course of being extinguished, vaporise the rain, and a cloud of steam of quadruple area of effect volume will be created. This steam will inflict 1-3 points of damage on normal creatures within its area, double damage on cold-dwelling or cold-using creatures. It will persist for 2-5 rounds, half that if a breeze is blowing, or only 1 round if a strong wind is blowing.

Lightning cannot be called by the use of a *cloudburst*. Vision is reduced to 10' within the area of effect. All tracks within the area of effect are obliterated in 1 round.

In arid regions, the *cloudburst* will act only as a double-strength *precipitation* spell. In hot and humid areas, the duration of the spell will be extended to 2 rounds. In areas with a temperature between 33° and 31° F inclusive, sleet rather than rain will fall, with ice and slush being formed when it accumulates. In temperatures of 30°F and lower, the *cloudburst* becomes *snowburst*, with one inch of snow falling per segment. Whether the vapour precipitates as rain, sleet or snow, very hot creatures not saving vs magic within the area of the spell will suffer 10 points of damage, plus 1 point of additional damage for every segment they remain within the area of the *cloudburst*.

The material components of the spell are powdered silver and powdered iodine crystals, plus the druid's mistletoe.

Spike Growth (Alteration/ Enchantment)

Level: *3*
Range: *6"*
Duration: *3-12 turns + 1 turn/ level*
Area of Effect: *1" square/level*
Components: *V, S, M*
Casting Time: *5 segments*
Saving Throw: *None*

Wherever any sort of plant growth of moderate size or intensity is found, this spell is of service. It enables the caster to cause ground-covering vegetation and/or roots to become very hard and sharply pointed. In effect, ground cover, while appearing to be nothing different, serves as if it were *caltrops* (official new weapon type — approx weight 2-4gp, damage vs size S-M, 1; damage vs size L, 1-2; length, n/a; space required, n/a; speed factor, n/a; AC adjustment, AC 2 — -6, AC 10 — +2; available as additional weapons to M-Us, Illusionists, Thieves, Monks and classes able to use any weapon. All other details in DRAGON™ magazine, # 64). Roots will do the same in areas of bare ground or earthen pits. Without such a spell as *true seeing*, similar magical aids, some other means of detection (such as *detect traps*), an area affected by *spike growth* is absolutely undetectable until a victim enters it and takes damage. Even then the creature will not be able to determine the extent of the area affected by the *spike growth* unless by means of magical detection. Each 1" of movement by a potential victim incurs 2 'attacks' (cf *spike stones*). Spells which will control or harm vegetation, as well as *dispel magic*, will negate the area of the dweomer. Otherwise, the spell will remain potent until its natural duration expires.

The components for this spell are the druid's mistletoe and seven small twigs, each sharpened to a point, or else seven sharp thorns.

Starshine (Evocation-Illusion)

Level: *3* Components: *V, S, M*
Range: *1"/level* Casting Time: *5 segments*
Duration: *1 turn/level* Saving Throw: *None*
Area of Effect: *1 square inch per level*

A *Starshine* spell enables the druid to illuminate an area softly, as if it were exposed to a clear night sky filled with stars. Regardless of the height of the open area in which the spell is cast, the area immediately beneath it will be lit by *starshine*. Vision will be clear at up to 30', indistinct to 60', and beyond that only gleams will be discernible. The *starshine* allows shadows. It enhances ultravision to its full potential but does not allow infravision. The spell makes the area of effect appear to be a night sky, but disbelief merely allows the disbeliever to note that the 'stars' are actually the evoked lights of a *starshine* spell.

The material components are several stalks from an amaryllis (especially Hypoxis) and several holly berries.

Liveoak (Enchantment)

Level: *5* Components: *V, S, M*
Range: *Touch* Casting Time: *1 turn*
Duration: *1 day/level* Saving Throw: *None*
Area of Effect: *1 oak tree*

This spell enables the druid to select a healthy oak tree and cause it to serve as a protector. The spell can be cast on a single tree at a time, and while a *liveoak* spell cast by a particular druid is in effect, the same druid cannot cast a second such spell.

The tree upon which this is cast must be within 10' of the druid's living place, within a place sacred to the druid, or within 10" of something which the druid wishes to protect. The *liveoak* spell is cast upon a healthy tree of small, medium or large size according to desire and availability. A 'triggering' phrase of a maximum of 1 word per level of the druid casting the spell is then placed upon the dweomered oak; for instance *'Attack any who come near without saying "sacred mistletoe" first'* is a 10-word trigger phrase which could be used by a druid of 10th level or higher. The *liveoak* triggers the oak into becoming a treant of appropriate size and attack capability, matching the specifications of the Monster Manual, but with only 3" movement rate. The druid needs mistletoe to cast this spell.

Moonbeam (Evocation-Alteration)

Level: *5* Components: *V, S, M*
Range: *1"/level* Casting Time: *7 segments*
Duration: *1 round/level* Saving Throw: *None*
Area of Effect: *1" diameter area (plus special)*

By means of this spell the druid is able to cast a beam of soft light to strike down from overhead and illuminate an area. The light is exactly the same as moonlight, so that colours other than shades of white and black will not be determinable.

The spell caster can easily cause the *moonbeam* to move to any area which can be seen and pointed at. This makes the spell an effective way to spotlight something, like an opponent. While the *moonbeam* allows shadows, a creature centred in a *moonbeam* spell is most certainly under observation. The reflected light from this spell allows dim visual perception 1" beyond the area of effect. The light does not adversely affect infravision, and enhances ultravision to its greatest potential.

The material components are several seeds of any moonseed plant and a piece of opalescent feldspar (moonstone).

Spike Stones (Alteration/Enchantment)

Level: *5* Components: *V, S, M*
Range: *3"* Casting Time: *7 segments*
Duration: *3-12 turns* Saving Throw: *None*
+1 turn/level
Area of Effect: *1" square/level of caster; 1 spike per 1' sq.*

The *spike stones* spell causes rock to shape itself into long, sharp points which blend into the background. It is effective on both natural rock and worked stone. The stone spikes serve to impede progress or actually inflict damage. If an area is carefully observed, it is 25% likely per observer that the sharp points of rock will be noticed. Otherwise, those entering the area of effect of the spell will effectively suffer attack by dagger from the druid of the level of the spell caster, immediately upon setting foot in the area and for each step therein thereafter. The initial step will be sufficient to allow the individual to become aware of some problem only if the attack succeeds; otherwise movement will continue until damage occurs. Charging/running victims will suffer 2 attacks per 1" of movement rate over the area of effect after initial damage before being able to halt. Others will suffer but 1 additional attack-like check.

Those falling into pits where *stone spikes* are present will suffer 6 such attack-like checks, each made at +2 'to hit' probability and +2 of damage inflicted per 10' of distance fallen, spike damage being in addition to falling damage. The material component of the spell is 4 tiny stalactites.

Transmute Water To Dust (Alteration) Reversible

Level: *6* Components: *V, S, M*
Range: *6"* Casting Time: *8 segments*
Duration: *Permanent* Saving Throw: *None (& special)*
Area of Effect: *1 cubic"/level*

When this spell is cast, the subject area instantly undergoes a change from liquid to powdery dust. Note that if the water is already muddy, the area of effect will be expanded to double normal, while if wet mud is concerned the area of effect will be quadrupled. If water remains in contact with the transmuted dust, the former will quickly permeate the latter, turning the dust to silty mud if a sufficient quantity of water exists to do so, otherwise soaking or dampening the dust accordingly.

Only liquid actually existing in the area of effect at the moment of spell casting is affected. Liquids which are only partially water will be affected to the extent that actual water is concerned. If a living creature is concerned, a saving throw vs magic is required, and only one creature can be the target for such spell usage, regardless of the size of the creature concerned. Failure to save results in the intended victim taking 8-32 points of damage, or twice this much vs creatures from the Elemental Plane of Water. The reverse of the spell is simply a very high-powered *create water* spell which requires dust as a component.

Either usage requires diamond dust of at least 500gp value, and a bit of seashell, as well as the druid's sprig of mistletoe.

Sunray (Evocation-Alteration)

Level: *7* Components: *V, S, M*
Range: *1"/level* Casting Time: *3 segments*
Duration: *1 round* Saving Throw: *Special*
Area of Effect: *1" diameter area (plus special)*

When a *sunray* spell is cast, the druid evokes a burning beam of light which is similar to a ray of actual sunlight in all important aspects. It inflicts blindness for 1-3 rounds on all creatures within its area of effect unless a successful saving throw vs magic is made. Creatures using ultravision at the time will be blinded for 2-8 rounds. Those within its area of effect, as well as creatures within 2" of its perimeter, will have no infravisual capabilities for 2-5 rounds. Undead caught within its main area of effect must save vs magic or take 8-48 points of damage, half damage if a save is made. Those within the secondary area of effect (up to 2" from the perimeter) must save to avoid taking 3-18 points of damage; no damage if this save is made. The ultraviolet light generated by the spell will inflict similar damage on fungoid creatures and subterranean fungi as well, just as if they were undead, but no saving throw is possible.

The material components are an aster seed and a piece of aventurine feldspar (sunstone).

Changestaff (Evocation-Enchantment)

Level: *7* Components: *V, S, M*
Range: *Touch* Casting Time: *3 segments*
Duration: *Special* Saving Throws: *None*
Area of Effect: *The druid's staff*

By means of this spell the druid is able to change his or her staff from a pole of dead wood into a treant of largest size. In order to cast the dweomer, the druid must first have located a tree struck by lightning within the past 24 hours, then must select a sound limb, remove it from the tree, and prepare a specially cured section. This section must be shaped and carved so as to be ready to accept the magic which the druid will then place upon it. The staff must be of ash, oak or yew wood. Curing by sun drying and special smoke requires 28 days. Shaping, carving, smoothing and polishing requires another 28 days. The finished staff, showing scenes of woodland life, is then rubbed with the juice of holly berries, and the end of it is thrust into the earth of the druid's grove while the druid *speaks with plants*, calling upon the staff to assist in time of need. The item is then charged with a dweomer which will last for many changes from staff to treant and back again.

While the staff/treant will initially be of largest size and greatest number of hit points, each 8 points of damage it accumulates actually reduces it by 1 hit die. The staff begins at 12 hit dice and 96 hit points, goes to 11 and 88, 10 and 80, 9 and 72, etc. As it loses hit dice, it becomes smaller in size, thus losing attack power as well. If and when the staff/treant is brought below 7 hit dice, the thing crumbles to sawdust-like powder and is lost. The staff cannot ever be brought upwards in dice or hit points, except by a *wish*. Of course, a new staff can always be sought out, seasoned, and so forth, to begin the process anew.

When the druid plants the end of the staff in the ground and speaks a special command prayer and invocation, the staff turns into a treant. It can and will defend the druid, or obey him or her in any way it can. However, it is by no means a true treant, and it cannot converse with actual treants. The transformation lasts for as many turns as the druid has levels of experience, until the druid commands the thing to return to its true form, or until the thing is destroyed, whichever occurs first.

In order to *changestaff*, the caster must have either mistletoe or leaves (ash, oak or yew) of the same sort as the staff.

Gary Gygax

ILLUMINATIONS

More gear for Car Wars

The amazing popularity of the bizarre **Car Wars** game shows no sign of slackening. Keeping up the momentum, Steve Jackson Games have announced two new expansion sets. Set 2, **East Midville**, has two street maps that link with the **Sunday Drivers** map, making for a truly huge playing area. Set 3, **Armadillo Autoduel Arena** has two 21" x 32" maps which make up a giant duelling arena. Finally, there is the **Car Wars Referee's Screen** providing all the charts and tables needed to control a typical session of highway horrors and heroics.

More news from SJG. They have split their monthly **Space Gamer** magazine into two bi-monthly publications. One retains the original name and is devoted exclusively to all aspects of SF. The other deals entirely with fantasy topics and is called, quite reasonably, **The Fantasy Gamer**. The first new-look Space Gamer came out in the US in June and the fantasy offspring came out in July.

Runequest Rumbles

Tom Shaw of Avalon Hill Games has confirmed that negotiations are taking place concerning AH buying the **Runequest** role-playing game from Chaosium Inc. 'Nothing has been signed yet', was his comment at the time this magazine went to press, but if a satisfactory conclusion can be reached, AH will market Runequest from next year. Steve Perrin of Chaosium Inc — a co-designer of Runequest — said that an agreement was very close and that the Chaosium will continue to produce RQ support material for sale through Avalon Hill.

It remains to be seen how such a deal might affect distribution in the UK, which is currently handled by London-based Games Workshop.

Meanwhile, Avalon Hill are pressing ahead with their own role-playing game, **Power and Perils**. Tom Shaw felt that P&P, a much less complex game, will appeal to different markets from RQ.

Recently arrived in the UK is **Pavis**, a meaty campaign package for Runequest. This is described as the first city base exclusively designed for the game, and contains maps, guides, adventures and history. Packed in an attractive box, this comprehensive (if rather expensive) play aid should prove very popular with RQ enthusiasts. Don't be misled by the box, by the way. Two of the short scenarios which are mentioned on the back of the box had to be left out at the last minute, apparently because one of the long scenarios became longer than was originally expected. The Chaosium, who publish **Pavis** state that the total amount of scenario material is not decreased, however. Price: £14.95.

IMAGINE™ magazine would like to thank Doug Cowie for his assistance with these items.

Transatlantic Tales

Having so nearly predicted the contents of the last shipment — it did include the STARFRONTIERS™ referee's screen, UK1, EX1, and TS004, but also brought EX2 **Beyond the Magic Mirror** and X4 **Master of the Desert Nomads** over earlier than expected — our confidence has been improved for this month's look into the crystal ball. The above are in the shops, and we look forward to I5 **Tomb of Martek**, X5 **Temple of Death** and GB3 **Death on the Docks**.

As the summer progresses, we should see M2 **Maze of the Riddling Minotaur** and the STARFRONTIERS/KNIGHTHAWKS™ game. Thereafter, we hope to see the **Ordeal of Magic** computer game in both Apple and Atari versions, and then even further forward into the mists of time the revised GAMMA WORLD™ game, O1 **Gem & the Staff**, L2 **Assassin's Knot**, GW4 **Mind Masters** and, of course **Monster Manual II** and the revised WORLD OF GREYHAWK™ gazetteer.

Wargaming fans should be pleased with the news that the first news of expected SPI™ games has reached us. Towards the end of the summer, **Wellington's Victory** and **Air War '80** should be reprinted and the brand new **Battle of Britain** and **A Gleam of Bayonets** games will appear. More new games are expected in the spring of 1984.

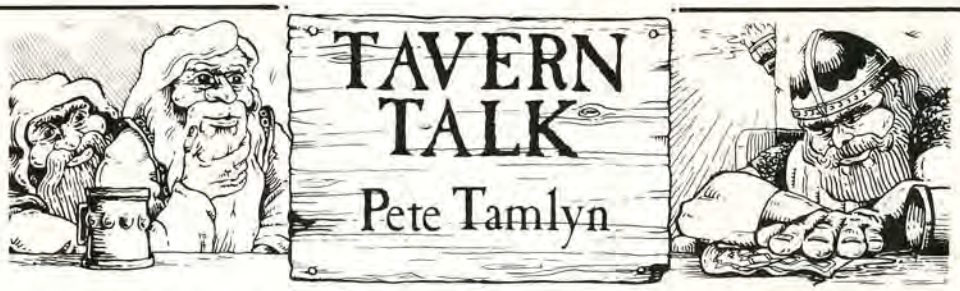
Lastly, Games Workshop have received some interesting material from the USA this summer. Possibly the most important development is the **Starter Edition** of **Traveller**, a complete beginners' introduction for £7.95. They are also stocking the I.C.E. range of fantasy scenarios based on J.R.R. Tolkein's Middle Earth books, playable with any FRP system. The range begins with **Middle Earth**, a guide book and poster map, **Angmar**, Land of the Witch King, **Umbar**, Haven of the Corsairs and **Ardor** a realm of Southern Middle Earth. Prices are £6.95 for the guide book and £7.95 each for the rest.

Conspiracy Theory

Operation Peregrine — The Quanchiovt Conspiracy is a new **Space Opera** adventure from FGU. The players' assignment is to destroy a criminal syndicate. Along the way they must rescue the Chief Connoisseur of the Horkalie Cult, who is leader of a remarkable religion which believes the universe is contained in the stomach of an enormous deity. They worship by shooting ship-loads of food into space. Prospective players be warned — the villains stop at nothing. It's even said that they are prepared to disrupt the annual Sky Cruiser Race on Grutzom! Is nothing sacred?

Warhammer

Citadel Miniatures have released their **Warhammer** rules. Described as the 'mass combat fantasy role-playing game' it consists of three books in a nice looking box: **Table-top Battles**, **Magic** and **Characters**. They provide rules for fantasy action ranging from role-playing individual characters to large battles. £5.95.



By the time you read this, **Dragonmeet** will have been and gone and hopefully a lot of you will have turned up at the fanzine stall, thrown eggs at Billenness and asked for my autograph. You will also have gone away with armfulls of fanzines. I know this because I have great faith in Simon's hard sell technique and he should be in fine form after all the practice he will have got during the General Election. I knew there was a use for politics somewhere.

Talking of which, the Convention Association idea floated in **Miser's Hoard** is still 'under discussion'. Not that anyone is opposed to the general principle, but some people are more wary of 'official' organisations than others. Fortunately the work goes on regardless and Mike Lewis informs me that he and Simon have an arrangement with Games Workshop to run a fanzine stall at all Games Days from now on. The London event is somewhat later than usual this year due to the hall being refurbished. I'll remind you about the arrangements nearer the date.

The biggest news item in the Postal Games hobby at present is the results of the Gladys Awards, the hobby's version of the Oscars, which are currently being run by Mike Allaway in **Pyrrhic Victory**. Somewhat surprisingly there is very little change from last year. Richard Hucknall's **Fall of Eagles** once again swept the board in the Diplomacy categories, an achievement which is all the more remarkable for the fact that FOE is being run down towards a fold. The general games categories were again dominated by the 'Tring mafia' with Alan Parr's **Hopscotch** exchanging places with **Acolyte** to win Best Games Zine but the respective editors holding reversed positions in Best Non-Diplomacy Games Master.

John Marsden's **Ode** was once again Best for Hobbynews and Tom Tweedy's **Dib Dib Dib** again took the Best Letter Column prize. The host zine managed to pip **Ripping Yarns** for Best Looking Zine, this being the only significant change since last year. The one category that cannot be won two years on the trot, Best New Zine, was shared between Paul McGivern's **Mercurius Aulicus** and Gary Piper's **The Road Goes Ever On**. There's very little RPG material in any of the above zines which is largely because RPG fanzines have only recently started to interest themselves in such competitions. Perhaps Mike can be persuaded to introduce a Best for RPGs category next year.

Also with regard to games fanzines, warmest congratulations are due to Clive Booth's **Chimaera** which has recently passed the magical 100 issues mark. These days Chimaera is something of a shadow of its former self when it twice won the Zine Poll, Clive was in the middle of every hobby feud and all I knew about the hobby was that it was one of the many odd things that Pete Lindsay did. In those days too Clive proudly ran a postal D&D® game. Reactions to FRP then were markedly less polite than they are now. The D&D game is still on the list of those run, though sadly there are only openings for Diplomacy. Only two other zines currently publishing are past 100 issues — Pete Birk's **Greatest Hits** and a rather retiring zine called **Courier** from someone called Turnbull who is believed to work for some games company or other.

One of the more pertinent questions that has been thrown at me about this column is 'why haven't you mentioned Brian Dolton yet?'. This is indeed a serious oversight because Dolton has made a career out of being a personality — the sort of fellow on whom gossip columns should thrive. Veteran FRP players may remember his first foray into editing, the late (very late on some occasions) **Demonsblood**. Since then he has been through the unique RPG discussion zine, **Death's Dance Taken Slowly**, and is now plaguing the world with **Lokasenna**, a games zine devoted to bad taste and noted for having a goblin as a regular columnist. Whether or not it is safe to bring Dolton to a wider audience is open to doubt, but it does give me an opportunity to make an important public appeal. At Games Day '81 someone was seen wearing an 'I hate Brian Dolton' tee-shirt. If anyone can identify that person please let me know because large numbers of fanzine editors want to buy him a drink.

Finally, some possible good news for anyone interested in playing a D&D game by post. Tom Tweedy has announced that he would like to run a game in Dib Dib Dib. This will be run on similar lines to the game that Dave Tant ran for Chimaera — PA members may recall Dave's articles about the game in **PAN**. Tom is looking for an unspecified number of players and a DM. The gamefee has yet to be fixed. By the publication date the game may have filled up, but if you are interested then drop a line to Tom at 29 Stanley Hill Avenue, Amersham, Bucks HP7 9BD. 35p for a copy of Dib would doubtless also be appreciated. After all, you'll need to get the zine to play the game.

Pete Tamlyn

EX1 —

Dungeonland is intended as an extension of any existing dungeon level or adventure setting for characters levels 9-12. When things are a mite boring or the players are showing signs of dissatisfaction, the DM should unobtrusively guide them into this module without them knowing what is happening. It is suggested that the module be concealed within the main body of the DM's campaign material so that the players are completely unaware that it is in use. Dungeonland is designed to perk up jaded senses with a testing and amusing change of pace. If run properly, it will succeed in this aim admirably. The underlying theme is excellent and as soon as it becomes apparent what it is, the DM (and the players, as the truth dawns on them) will think 'Great. Now why didn't I think of that?' Since prospective players are as likely to read this review as DMs are, I can't give the game away, but let's say that this module is based upon a classic piece of fantastic literature, and leave it at that. The designer has translated the basic components into an imaginative setting for the AD&D™ game, with added layers of detail culled from his own extensive gaming experience.

Play takes place around the Wilds of Dungeonland but since it is a highly

X4 — MASTER OF

It's not unusual for module designers to use the device of a full scale war to provide a suitably dramatic setting for their adventures. More often than not, a basically decent ruler finds his territories invaded by an alliance of foul monsters and evil men. His own armies are powerless to stem the tide so he advertises for adventurers to help. This is the cue for the party of players to step forward. As a last desperate hope they set off alone to slip through the enemy lines in a bid to defeat the source of the evil in its lair. All rather reminiscent of the role of Frodo and Sam in *Lord of the Rings*.

X4 — Master of the Desert Nomads has been given this scarcely original plot for its players to adventure in. However, right from the start, the designer has built onto the stereotype with intelligence and imagination. Instead of being ushered into the presence of the governor, king, duke or whatever, as usually happens, the characters begin the game as the lowest form of mercenaries volunteering to fight in the Republic's army. Just to reinforce the message that they are not exactly the centre of the universe, the players learn that they are too late to march with the main army and so they must join the reserves, 'undesirables and

DUNGEONLAND

magical enclave, things are often not where or what they seem. Certain keyed areas provide the major encounters, but players may strike off the beaten track if they insist (and they usually do!). They will quickly find that the forest which borders the clearings and paths is a horrendously difficult obstacle to move through, inhabited by daunting monsters. The encounters are loosely linked, but it is not disastrous if they are not followed in the 'right' order. Thus DMs do not need to indulge in dubious sleight-of-hand to get the players to follow a predetermined story. An exception to this does exist — in one place a certain chain of events has to occur — but this provides an opportunity for the DMs to test their skills.

There is a whimsical vein of humour running through this module but, true to its literary inspiration (no, I'm still not saying what the source is), this can, on occasions, be very black humour. Any players who imagine that they are in a happy-go-lucky playground may be swiftly and roughly disabused of such a notion. They will quickly learn, should they survive, that Dungeonland is dangerous as well as delightful.

My only quibble is with the maps. There are 5 or 6, all of which are keyed by letters, and several letters are common to all the maps. This caused momentary confusion on occasions, compounded by the fact that the maps are sometimes referred to by numbers although none of them is actually numbered. The numbers in fact refer to the encounters. These are also named and the maps for each encounter carry the same names so it is possible to identify the correct map by this convoluted method. It would have been much easier to number the maps as well as naming them. This merely emphasises how necessary it is for the DM to read the module carefully before running it.

There are some interesting new monsters and magic items presented that I'm sure will soon be transferred to other campaigns. I particularly liked the Hat of Disguises which allows the wearer to alter his or her appearance in a number of ways. This would be a very useful aid for any character but particularly for thieves or assassins.

This product is a good example of how module design is developing. They remain interesting and technically sound whilst displaying more and more conceptual originality. As the output of modules has increased they could so easily have

become reiterations of a set of clichés. Dungeonland certainly isn't that. The designer has done a splendid job in converting a work of literature into a game setting without harming the subtleties of either. As a game it runs very smoothly due, no doubt to extensive playtesting. I look forward to the follow up, **Beyond the Magic Mirror**. Oh, by the way, it's only fair to name the designer of such a good piece of work. It's Gary Gygax.

THE DESERT NOMADS

unusables', who are merely second rate reinforcements. After a while, the players do get a special mission to perform. The precise nature of this mission depends upon whether the DM intends to carry the adventure on into Module X5 — **The Temple of Death**, or not. Either way, it involves a hazardous wilderlands journey with numerous encounters and several dungeon style sub-adventures en route.

The designer has done a good job in creating the atmosphere of a land at war. Many of the encounters reflect this with organised patrols of soldiers of various races to be outfought or outwitted. At one stage the party may find themselves in the middle of a huge enemy army.

This is the kind of complicated encounter that most designers shy away from but David Cook handles it well, covering the most likely actions a party would take in such a situation. An experienced DM will be able to control this encounter without too much trouble. This meeting with an entire enemy army serves two useful purposes. It heightens the air of tension and foreboding which should exist in the middle of a war and it reinforces the advisability of the party using stealth at least as often as force.

There is another large scale incident which the party is likely to find itself involved in. This is a battle between 100 bandits and 40-50 caravan guards. Once again most module designers would consider such a clash too unwieldy and would leave it out. With a little ingenuity, however, Mr Cook has devised a perfectly workable system which allows the whole battle to be fought in a reasonable amount of time and with the players utilising their characters' abilities to the full. A large fight like this, particularly if the DM has sufficient pieces to recreate it with model figures, is a most exciting and invigorating experience for any group of players.

There are plenty of more traditional encounters as well, some requiring wit and thoughtfulness and some requiring force and vigour. The final set piece is in a classic corridors-and-rooms setting. It has a fine, threatening atmosphere and some good NPCs. There is also a lovely twist in the plot that could put an unwary party in a lot of trouble.

As usual, there are several new monsters provided. The Juggernaut is an interesting idea, being a magical infernal machine. Its nature can be guessed from its name. However, I would advise players to watch out for the Bhuts — the trouble is you may not know you have met one until it's too late....

The only real drawback of this module is that to have a reasonable chance of progressing through to the end, the players have to make the correct deductions and choose the right courses of action at certain stages. This is inevitable in an adventure which has a definite goal (a 'quest' adventure if you like) but those who want a completely free choice game should look elsewhere. Most DMs will want their players to experience all that the module has to offer because it is of such a high standard. To achieve this, however, they will have to be prepared to indulge in covert and (if things get desperate) some overt prompting. The designer has included provision for this, which is a great help if used sparingly and wisely by the DM.

This is a good module with some particularly noteworthy sections. It is clearly presented and mapped. If you can accept the need for some player guidance and prompting, you will find it a worthwhile and enjoyable experience.

Doug Cowie

UK1 — BEYOND THE CRYSTAL CAVE

The 'UK' tag gives it away, of course. This module was designed in Britain. So, what kind of a job have Dave J Browne, Tom Kirby and Graeme Morris done to reflect the state of play in the AD&D™ game in the UK at the moment? Well, they haven't let us down, that's for sure.

But first the bare bones. **Beyond the Crystal Cave** is an adventure for 5-10 characters of levels 3 to 6 and it is virtually a pre-requisite that one of them should be a cleric or a druid. It is set in an area shown on the WORLD OF GREYHAWK™ map. The components are an illustrated, 32-page booklet protected by a thin card wrap. Maps and plans are printed on the inside of the cover and in the booklet. As is now customary with AD&D modules, the layout is clear, the descriptions lucid and accurate and the maps good.

Thoughtful players of AD&D have long sought to divert the emphasis of the game away from gratuitous violence and greed — the so-called 'hack and slay' adventure. Many modules claim in their introduction that 'diplomacy and intelligent play will be rewarded more than indiscriminate aggression'. This is such a module and it is more successful than most in achieving its aim. Characters who destroy and plunder will find treasure certainly, but precious few experience points and some very formidable opposition. Those who adopt a sympathetic and courteous approach can conceivably go through the whole adventure without drawing a weapon. The main setting of the adventure, Porpherio's Garden, is highly original and well thought out. The new monsters which are provided have promise for extended use — particularly the Green Man, an Old English eccentric if ever there was one.

Anything wrong with it? I thought some of the garden's inhabitants were too prone to random attack considering the heavy emphasis on peace and goodwill. A party which is conscientiously playing a calm, gentle, diplomatic role can find itself the subject of physical assault on an arbitrary roll of a dice, giving a 50% chance of attack. This is a minor point, however, easily altered by a DM who wishes to do so. Overall, UK1 is a refreshing change which gives the talkative sort of character a place in the limelight too often filled by the brutish fighter or the powerful MU. There is also ample opportunity for a weary DM to indulge in some sprightly fun. A good package. Try it for a relaxing change.

Doug Cowie

CITY OF SORCERORS

This is a fantasy boardgame for 2-4 players, each an apprentice sorceror learning his trade before being tested. It is a well-produced offering in an attractive box, and includes: 78 Knowledge, 77 Fate, 25 College of the Arch-Mage and 11 Artifact cards; 4 different Arena maps, each 8 x 11 inches; a 16 x 22 inch City Map (essentially a glorified playing-aid sheet); 25 large hex-shaped terrain chits (used for altering terrain in the Arena); 66 counters representing havens, monsters, artifacts and spells (spoilt by being rather too thin); dice; players' notes sheets; an information sheet and rules book (whew!).

The game is divided into two parts. In the first, the players are fledgelings studying 'elements of magic' — artifacts, spells (monster conjuring, monster control and several others), potions, psychic potential, mystery levels and ancient tomes. Each turn the players move on the City Map, enrolling in one of the eight colleges, such as those of the Alchemist or the School of Magic, which specialise in one or more of these elements. After enrolling, cards are generally drawn from one of the decks and players may attempt to keep the cards of their choice. Much luck is involved, but certain rules devices do enable players to make decisions and choices so that, to an extent, they can dabble in the elements they prefer.

Magic research can be hazardous, and players may draw 'malediction and affliction' cards which vary in their detrimental effects. All afflictions can be cured, but it is up to the player to decide whether it is in his best interests to spend time on the cure or suffer the problem, for there is something of the race element in part 1. After 18 turns Research ceases and players are put to the test in the arena, whether they are ready or not.

In part 2, an arena is randomly selected from the four. Each depicts a wilderness with different terrain. Players secretly note the location hex of their 'haven' — a stronghold within the arena — and then, by various magical means, must detect and eliminate opponents' havens to win. To this end artifacts and spells may be utilised, monsters conjured and controlled, terrain altered and psychic points expended. Players are not represented by counters themselves, and may not leave their havens; they are Saruman-like sorcerors, working magic and manipulating monsters from their towers. As there are only 20 hexes in the arena, havens are quickly discovered, so action moves fast and furiously; this second part should rarely last more than 6 turns. Compared to part 1 luck is less influential and the winner will usually be the player who had the most success with magical research.

Unfortunately, though fast-moving, quite fun, and easily finishable in under three hours, City of Sorcerors suffers from poorly written rules. They are too brief and consequently flawed. True, a read through all the cards will furbish answers to many rules queries, but reading slipshod rules and then going through 190-odd cards is not the way to learn a games system. Ironically, once mastered the game is as simple to play as the rules intended. Pity.

Robert Hulston

***City of Sorcerors**, a boxed boardgame with cards, counters, rules and other aids, is manufactured in this country by Standard Games and Publications, Arlon House, Station Road, Kings Langley, Hertfordshire WD4 8LF. It costs £9.95.*

*Standard are previously known for the games **Cry Havoc**, a medieval combat simulation game, and **Starship Captain**, a game of war in space. These have been re-released in an attractive boxed form, with minor alterations to the original games. These versions cost £9.95 and £12.95 respectively.*

STARFRONTIERS™ GAME-SCREEN

The STARFRONTIERS™ game-screen enables referees to hide their notes, maps and dice rolls from the prying eyes of over-enthusiastic players behind three $10^1/_2$" x $8^1/_2$" panels, printed on card. It provides a handy source of ready reference tables, with combat tables, skill success scores, reaction modifiers and vehicle tables on the referee's side and equipment costs, skill acquisition costs, terrain charts, robots and computers covered on the players' side. It is well laid out and speeds up play by removing the need to be continuously referring to the rule book.

Included with the screen is an eight page mini-module, **Assault of Starship Omicron**, containing two adventures. The adventures are set on board the Omicron, a starship owned by the Pan Galactic Corporation. Lost years ago, it has recently been found drifting in space with all the crew and passengers dead, killed by an unknown disease. It has now been decontaminated and the players have been hired to travel with the ship to the nearest starport. Eight pre-generated characters are provided possessing high skill levels, making the module unsuitable for players with low level characters. Accompanying the players are five robots which play diffferent roles in each scenario.

The first scenario deals with a group of aliens, armed to the teeth, boarding the Omicron. It is a fast moving shoot-out with laser rifles crackling all over the ship. It raises an important question, however — how does the alien ship sneak up on the Omicron undetected?

Both scenarios are playable separately as boardgames. They use the deck plan from the boxed set with the addition of an upper deck provided with the module. New rules deal with control of the ship's systems which can change hands frequently during the course of the first adventure. As an added bonus a new alien race is introduced. The two adventures, even if not used in campaign play, make enjoyable and exciting playing sessions in their own right and can be played on evenings when there are only a few players available. The screen is what STARFRONTIERS referees have been waiting for. Now you can relax, confident that your 'secret' maps are safely hidden from prying eyes. If you take your refereeing seriously you cannot afford to be without it. Need I say more?

Jim Bambra

QUANTUM JUMP

This is an abstract movement game aimed at the family market for 2-4 players aged 7 and upwards. Understandably, the rules are extremely simple and easily learned — everything appears on a single sheet. It comes boxed, with a mounted 24 x 18 inch playing board, 2 dice, 26 plastic 'tiddlywink' pieces in 4 colours and the inevitable box space-filler....

The game board depicts five concentric rings, loosely representing energy levels within an atom. Each is tracked into 'squares' to regulate the movement of pieces. At the start of play all pieces are placed 'out of play' at the centre, and players alternately roll the dice to bring pieces into play — 6 to start, and a free roll for every 6. In-play pieces move anti-clockwise around the rings according to the dice rolls, though players have a lot of control over how, at least when they have more than one piece in play.

A piece which lands directly on a 'jump-square' moves up to the next ring. Movement between rings is also governed by 'zapping' and 'blatting'. A piece which passes any other piece 'zaps' it down onto the ring below. A piece which lands directly on another piece 'blats' the target piece down a ring and boosts the blatter up a ring. These rules provide most of the fun; 'blatting', 'blatted' and 'zapped' pieces can 'blat' in their own right, causing intricate chain-reactions. This is why they call it 'a game of exasperation'.

Equally frustrating are the victory conditions, whereby the winner must have a piece on the Quantum Jump square at a time when exactly half the other pieces are in play.

In many ways the game is derived from ludo, but it is probably better than that old classic due to the greater control players can exercise over their pieces and the extra thought required for some moves. It is fine if you like abstract games, but will not really interest exclusively 'adventure' gamers.

Robert Hulston

***Quantum Jump**, a board game with rules, counters and dice is produced in this country by Orca Games, 5 Dorking Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN12 2LN. It costs £5.95.*

DIXON'S SAMURAI

Dixon Miniatures has been in the business of producing 25mm wargame figures for several years, with a good deal of success. The best known of these are the large number of Samurai that Trevor Dixon specialises in sculpting. Recently, Trevor has been engaged upon resculpting his Samurai range and adding new models.

The new figures, and the re-designed ones, are done to the new Dixon standard, rather thick-set but cleanly cast and well detailed. If, at times, the anatomy seems a little strange, the figures look extremely good when placed together.

The main part of the range is still the Samurai and Ashigaru (lower rank Samurai). There are several different poses available for both sorts — the Samurai with his sword held 'at the ready' is particularly fine and Japanese in feel. One nice feature of the range is the casting of polearms and battle-banners separately — giving the modeller a good deal of freedom in choosing what the finished product looks like.

Mounted figures have also been re-designed. The new horses are now 'Eastern' looking, rather than European and come in several convincing poses. The horses also have the traditional Samurai tassels in profusion. The riders have been redone, and the victorious Samurai, complete with the heads of his conquests, is a particularly savage piece.

Added to the range are several subjects of relevance to role-playing gamers, including three ninja (Japanese Assassins), one of whom is just about to launch a throwing star at some poor unfortunate. The other two ninja are not quite as dramatic — one is charging into the attack, the other firing a shortbow. There are also some Samurai in 'undress' rather than in full battle armour. All these figures are again cleanly cast, well animated and attractively chunky.

Although these figures may not seem to be directly relevant to RPG players, they are worth looking at for anyone interested in BUSHIDO or something similar, or someone looking for a fighter with a difference. I look forward to the day when Trevor Dixon designs some non-military and/or fantasy subjects based on his knowledge of the Samurai.

Mike Brunton

Dixon Miniatures are available from Dixon Miniatures, Unit 28, Spring Grove Mills, Linthwaite, Huddersfield, W. Yorks. Prices range from 28p for a 25mm unmounted figure.

Conventionally Speaking....

Part of the accepted history of this hobby is that role-playing games owe an inspirational debt to the world of fantasy- and science-fiction. It's been said that inside every SF fan is a potential gamer, waiting to be brought into the hobby.

SF fans share one thing in common with gamers, ie the habit of attending annual shin-digs where lots of other fans of a similar persuasion can be discovered, greeted and socialised with. Readers of this magazine will be aware of the gaming variants, known best in the guises of *Games Day, GamesFair* and *Dragonmeet*. Yet there is another breed of this animal, found under the names of *Novacon* and, most recently, *Sol III*. If you've never been to a convention (of either variety) then you haven't lived.

Sol III was the 15th official Star Trek convention, held over the weekend of 27th-30th May at the Grand Hotel, Birmingham. Similarities with conventions in the gaming world were evident. Just like a GamesFair, the socialising and the meeting of old friends is as important as the organised events. Just like a Games Day, some of the participants feel the urge to dress up in suitable costume. And just like a Dragonmeet, the stalls selling the peripheral paraphernalia do a roaring trade.

But there are subtle differences in style. One concept barely scratched in the gaming world is that of the 'guest star'. Sol III had James (Scotty) Doohan and Walter (Chekov) Koenig from the TV series, and Anne McCaffrey and Bob Shaw for additional artistic integrity. To be fair, it is difficult to think of obvious candidates for gamers — though Gary Gygax did the job well at GamesFair. In fact, Gary was more easily approachable there than the guests at Sol III, who were wheeled on to perform, then disappeared. Still, the queue for autographs stretching halfway round the hotel would be inconceivable in the gaming world.

A highlight of the Star Trek convention was a Shuttlecraft Debate; just like a Balloon Debate, only with a multi-system integrity shortfall instead of a leak. Yeoman Janice Rand appealed for survival because of her.... *condition*; a very Lawful Good Mr Saavik suggested that everyone *else* should survive; the Security Man threatened to beat up anyone who suggested he should go; the Klingon had information that the Federation needed; the stowaway Tribble.... well, who knows what it tapped out on the microphone; and Mr Scott wanted to be thrown out because he was old and past it. In the true tradition of Star Trek, the security man got it first (Bob Shaw — 'I've been thrown out of better shuttlecraft than this') and Scotty survived by a landslide, presumably because if being old and past it was a consideration, Star Fleet would lose 90% of its senior officers.

Something else struck us as amazing, later the same day. There was an auction, mostly of back issues of fanzines. If this ever catches on in the gaming world, and you've got a **Dragonlords** # 1, hang on to it! The prices were quite amazing, and there are just as many fanzines to do with Star Trek as there are in this hobby of ours, it seems. Incredible.

Beyond this, there wasn't a lot to choose between the two kinds of event. Substitute women in short Star Fleet uniforms for women in short Elven gear, and supercool Starship commanders for axe-wielding adventurers, and you wouldn't notice the difference. Well, maybe. The gaming hobby is still very young, and its adherents reflect its youth. That will change though, and we'll have the stars of 'D&D — the movie' mixing with their idolising fans.

Paul Cockburn
Kim Daniel

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The Taking of Slandobhair

by Graeme Davis

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

This mini-module has been designed for a group of 4-7 characters of 4th to 6th levels of experience. It requires information only found in the **AD&D**™ game rules, and cannot be played without them.

The inspiration for this scenario comes from the legends of the Celtic people. However, it is not intended to be a reconstruction of any particular story from that mythos, nor is it intended to be an adventure set in any historical context. The scenario has been designed to allow the DM to introduce a Celtic *feel* into play. Therefore it is possible for players to use characters who have not existed in this kind of background before, but who have taken up residence in the lands of Conall mac Éogan.

If you plan to play in this adventure, please stop reading here. The information in the rest of this mini-module is for your Dungeon Master (DM) only.

THE TAKING OF SIANDABHAIR

The Taking of Siandabhair is divided into five sections:

Part 1 (this section) is an introduction to the mini-module.

Parts 2-4 are the detailed adventure keys for the three encounters which comprise the adventure — the lairs of the Old Women of the Bay, Lough and Mountains. All the information necessary to run the adventure is provided in a series of area keys.

Part 5 contains details of a new monster — the Mountain Hag.

Four maps are provided. One shows the lay of the land over which the adventure takes place; others relate to the lairs of the Old Women.

Where monsters or NPCs are described in the text statistics for them are presented in brackets in the following order:

Armour Class (AC); Movement Rate (MV); Hit Dice (HD) or Class/Level; hit points (hp); Number of Attacks (# AT); Damage caused by attack(s) (D); any other notes, eg Special Attacks (SA), Special Defences (SD); experience points (xp), Alignment (AL), Size (S).

BACKGROUND NOTES

The DM should read the following passage to the players before the adventure:

You are gathered in the Throne Hall of the castle of Conall mac Éogan, a powerful and respected monarch. As subjects of the King, you have answered his summons with considerable despatch; now you find yourselves standing before the King, his advisers and officers. At the King's side, Cormac mac Culinan, his trusted bard, steps forward, taps his staff upon the floor to silence the throng in the Hall, and speaks in loud, ringing tones.

'Strong is the fortress of Conall mac Éogan,
And strong the arm that rules it.
Proud are the warriors of Conall mac Éogan,
And proud the King who leads them.
Many and glorious are the heroes of his Halls,
And glorious are the boasts that fly before them into battle.

'Three daughters were born to Conall mac Éogan,
And many were the princes and heroes who came to him
Seeking the hand of one in marriage.
The youngest of the three was Siandabhair,
And she was her father's pride.
Her beauty would need another tale to tell of it,
And of the heroes who sought to win her.

'Siandabhair of the three daughters of Conall mac Éogan
Went to make sacrifice on the Isle of the Seabirds,
Conall with all his warriors watched her return from the island.
As it entered the bay to take harbour by the fortress of the king,
The boat stopped in clear water as though it had run aground.
The twelve warriors of her escort redoubled their oar-strokes,
Until the rowlocks smoked and the oars broke in their hands.
But still the boat would not move.
'Then there appeared a great number of blue men from the water all about the boat.

'They were scaly like fishes,
And they capsized the boat,
And the princess and the warriors with it,
And dragged them under the water.

'As all there stood and watched in horror and helplessness,
There appeared from the water of the bay an old woman,
So ugly that no man could bear to look on her,
But all kept their eyes averted.
She hailed Conall, and spoke to him tauntingly:

'Ho, Conall of the many boasts,
Whose eye all women seek,
Whose favour all men seek,
Where now is your glory?
Here's a day's work to add to your boasting!
Your pretty is with me now,
What use are your proud heroes?
What use your petty armies?
Boast of this day's deeds, great King,
Of how you watched your daughter's taking.

'Then she returned to the waters of the bay, laughing as the waves covered her.'

At this point Cormac mac Culinan steps back, and the King rises, his eyes clouded with rage. He looks about him, at his assembled warriors, and through his tears of grief he cries:

'Where are the heroes among you? Where are the warriors? Who will slay me the foul witch and fetch me back my daughter? He who brings me that ugly head shall have its weight in gold, and shall be my champion, and shall have first place after me throughout my domains. How say you?'

A great tumult fills the hall. To each group the King gives specific instructions; saying to some that they are to ride to the north to seek his daughter among the hillmen, to others that they are to search among his enemies to the west. To you he speaks thus:

'Swear this oath to me, to undertake this quest. Each man of you is a hero, and each man of you has done deeds the telling of which would need another of Cormac mac Culinan's stories. To you I give the most dangerous task. Go into the bay, rescue Siandabhair, cut off the old woman's head and bring it back to me.'

You do swear thus, as honour decrees you must. At this point Ollamh Cnochuainne, the King's druid, comes forward, and gives each of you a broth to drink, and tells you that for this day and the day after you will be able to breathe both air and water, like frogs, but that the virtue of the broth will most certainly be gone from you on the third day.

DUNGEON MASTER'S BACKGROUND

Conall mac Éogan's daughter has been kidnapped by a trio of Hags — two Sea Hags and a Mountain Hag. Siandabhair and her retinue were first captured by the Old Woman of the Bay, a Sea Hag. The first part of the adventure is a short expedition by the party to attempt to rescue Siandabhair from her watery prison (Part 2 of this module).

The second part of the adventure (Part 3 of this module) occurs when the party find that Siandabhair has gone — transferred to the lair of the Old Woman of the Lough, a member of the rare freshwater Sea Hag race. Once the party raid her lair they again find that Siandabhair has been snatched from their grasp and sent to the Old Woman of the Mountains — a Mountain Hag (see Part 5 for details of this monster).

The Old Woman of the Mountains is the final encounter (see part 4), and within her lair Siandabhair is being kept prisoner.

The DM should note that the structure of this adventure is non-standard. Some groups of players, on learning that there are three sisters, might not deal with them in the intended order. The Celtic background is such that the monsters should be met and conquered in the order given above, and the players should not normally be told of the existence of the next sister until they have dealt with the current one.

The broth that the party has been given to drink is the equivalent of a much augmented **potion of water breathing**. Its effects will last for 36 +d12 hours (determine separately for each character).

Part 2: The Old Woman of the Bay

Having consumed the potion, the party should be encouraged to set out to the bay, escorted to the water's edge by the King and his followers. Looking across the bay's mouth from the harbour within the fortress, the party can see across to the Isle of Seabirds, a distance of about a mile and a half.

The mouth of the bay is about a mile wide. Halfway across the bay's mouth is the top of a rocky reef, standing about 20 feet below low-tide level, pitted with a number of cave mouths and tunnels. The currents are gentle, and unarmoured men have swum the width of the bay on many occasions.

Conall mac Éogan calls to one of his followers and a rowing boat is dragged across the sand to the water for the party's use.

The Isle of Seabirds

This is little more than a grassy hummock rising barely 25 feet above the high-tide level. The isle is inhabited only by gulls and other seabirds.

The only feature of interest on the isle is the sacrificial site used by Conall mac Éogan's people for generations. This is a single standing stone, set in a ring of a dozen poles topped by human skulls.

Although Conall and his people have a reverential regard for skulls, they are not evil, nor are they head-hunters. They regard the head as the source of knowledge and wisdom.

The DM should make clear to the players that there is nothing of relevance to their quest on the Isle of Seabirds, and encourage them to pursue other lines of enquiry.

The Reef

The reef is the home of the Old Woman of the Bay. Up to now this sea hag has never directly troubled Conall mac Éogan or his people. Having taken Siandabhair prisoner, she has made preparations to defend herself from Conall's expected vengeance.

The Reef's Defenders

There are two methods of approaching the reef available to the party — by boat or by walking across the bottom of the bay, taking advantage of Ollamh Cnochuainne's broth of water breathing. The reactions of the defenders depend entirely upon the route the party chooses.

If the party decides to use the rowing boat that Conall provides to visit the reef, or passes close to the reef while sailing to the Isle of Seabirds, it will be spotted. On top of the reef the Old Woman has stationed a kelpie (see below for the statistics), who is watching for the approach of any surface vessels.

The reef itself is patrolled constantly by two watches of evil mermen (see below for statistics), one patrol to the seaward side and one to the landward. These patrols will spot anyone approaching across the bottom of the bay 75% of the time.

When a boat is sighted, the kelpie (AC 3; MV 9"//12"; HD 5; hp 30; # AT nil; SA **charm**; AL NE; S M; 315xp) will alert the watches before returning to the surface to **charm** away as many of the occupants of the boat as she can. Male adventurers should save vs. spells (at -2) or they will willingly leap into the water to reach her side. Female adventurers will not be affected by the spell. When the kelpie realises that her spell is not causing the deaths of those who leap into the water, she will flee rather than get involved in direct combat. The mermen of the nearest patrol will attack the occupants of the boat and anyone in the water. After 5 rounds a further group of mermen will arrive from encounter area 3, having been alerted by the kelpie, and after a further 3 rounds the remaining two watches from within the reef will arrive from encounter area 6. The mermen will seek to force a pitched battle outside the reef, seeking to overcome the party by sheer force of numbers.

If one of the merman patrols spots the party approaching across the bottom of the bay, they will not conduct a full scale assault, but send one of their number to fetch the group from encounter area 3 and harrass the party from a distance. When the reinforcements arrive (after five rounds) all will attack; after a further three rounds the other two watches from within the reef will arrive from encounter area 6 and join the fray. After a further ten rounds the merman patrol from the other side of the reef will arrive and attack the party.

The mermen (AC 7; MV 1"//18"; HD 1+1; hp see below for each group; # AT 1; D by weapon type; AL N; S M) who serve the Old Woman of the Bay are divided into five watches or patrols as follows:

Watch A: hp 6, 6, 5, 5; xp 32, 32, 30, 30.
Watch B: hp 9, 8, 7, 5; xp 38, 36, 34, 30.
Watch C: hp 9, 8, 5, 4; xp 38, 36, 30, 28.
Watch D: hp 8, 7, 6, 3; xp 36, 34, 32, 26.
Watch E: hp 7, 6, 5, 3; xp 34, 32, 30, 26.

The mermen are armed as follows: three members of each group are armed with tridents (D 2-7/3-12), the fourth has an aquatic light crossbow (range 3/6/9, D 1-6/1-6) and a small net. All have daggers (D 1-4/1-3).

Watch A patrols the landward side of the reef, Watch B the seaward side. Watch C will be in encounter area 3, unless alerted by the kelpie or one of the external patrols. Watches D and E will be asleep in encounter area 6 unless the party has been attacked. If the party enters encounter area 3 and attacks Watch C there, Watches D and E will move to encounter area 5 and be met there.

The mermen have orders to take at least one prisoner from any group of intruders. This unfortunate will be returned to Conall, after the Old Woman and the mermen have amused themselves by torturing him or her, bearing a highly uncomplimentary message for the king. Part of the text of the message will be the same as the Old Woman's last words (see encounter area 7).

The Caves in the Reef

The following area descriptions relate to map 2 (the Lair of the Old Woman of the Bay). The cave complex is entirely flooded, and characters are subject to the normal penalties involved in underwater action (see **DMG** pp 55-57).

There is only one obvious entrance into the reef; this is through area 1 at sea bed level (50 feet below the surface). A second, hidden entrance leads into area 4 on the lower level of the reef at the same depth.

Area 1, The Cave Mouth

A few yards in front of the cave mouth on the sea bed is the remains of Siandabhair's ceremonial boat. There is no sign of the girl or her warrior escort.

Around the cave mouth at sea bed level are six closely-packed strands of strangle weed (AC 6; MV nil; HD 3; hp 23, 23, 20, 11, 10, 9; # AT 1; D see below; AL N; S S; xp 104(x2), 95, 68, 65, 62), deliberately placed to ensure that all who enter the reef must do so through the middle of the entrance in plain sight.

The plant grows 6 fronds in a 12 square foot patch, 3 fronds on each side of the cave mouth. Each frond is 7 feet long. Any creature within reach will be attacked, a hit indicating that a frond has entwined its victim. Each frond has a strength of 13 points. A victim compares its strength with the strength of the fronds — a difference in the victim's favour gives its chance of escaping, ie 1 equals 10% etc. A difference in the weed's favour indicates that the victim takes that number of points of crushing damage. When attacking normally a creature that is entwined strikes at -2 on 'to hit' rolls.

In the sand and detritus beneath the strangle weed are 20cp, 77sp, 132gp, 15pp and a **ring of water walking**. The DM should note that any character who puts the ring on will be propelled immediately upwards, and will end up standing on the surface of the water.

Area 2, Entrance Tunnel

The walls of the passage leading from the cave mouth (area 1) to the chamber within (area 3) are riddled with holes about 6 inches in diameter, in which lurks a colony of 15 Weed Eels. These have been trained to attack anyone entering the passage other than a merman.

The bite of a Weed Eel (AC 8; MV 15"; HD 1-1; hp 7(x1), 6(x3), 5(x2), 4(x3), 2(x2), 1(x4); # AT 1; D 1; SA poison; AL N; S S; xp 52(x3), 51(x5), 50(x4), 49(x6), 48(x2), 47(x4), 46(x6)) is lethal. If bitten, the victim must save vs poison or die in 2-8 rounds.

Area 3, Lower Cavern

The top half of this high chamber (35 feet high) leads to area 5 on the upper level. Normally, a patrol of mermen (Watch C) is stationed here, although they may have left the reef to attack the intruders. If the kelpie or one of the external patrols raised the alarm, Watch C will have alerted the rest of the reef before leaving to give battle. If the patrol is first

encountered in this room, the mermen will seek to escape upwards, towards the opening into area 5, which is not visible from the floor of this level, to alert the rest of the mermen in area 6.

There is little of interest to the party in here, the contents being valueless sea-wrack scattered across the floor — ships' timbers, rotted rope-work etc.

Area 4, Small Chamber
This is the lower part of the cave (area 9) where the Old Woman's pet sea lions are housed. The area can be entered from outside the reef along a passage from a hidden entrance. The Old Woman and her sea lions use this route to avoid unnecessary trouble with the Weed Eels in the entrance tunnel (area 2).

Area 5, Upper Cavern
This large chamber opens out from the uppermost part of area 3. If the alarm has been raised by Watch C when attacked in the lower cavern (area 3), the two off-duty watches (D and E) will rush into this chamber from their living quarters (area 6) to meet the intruders, and the Old Woman (from area 7, the Old Woman's room) will appear after 10 rounds with her sea lions (from area 9, the sea lions' den). Otherwise this chamber will be unoccupied.

Area 6, Mermen's Living Quarters
The two off-duty mermen patrols rest here. If the kelpie or one of the external patrols has alerted Watch C in area 3, then Watches D and E will have sallied forth to meet the party outside the reef. If Watch C raised the alarm when attacked by the party in area 3, these two patrols will have proceeded to area 5. Otherwise they will be asleep in this chamber.

At one end a rough corral has been built out of ships' timbers and rope to hold a pair of giant eels (AC 6; MV 9"; HD 5; hp 36, 27; # AT 1; D 3-18; AL N; S M; xp 270, 225) which the mermen are training to help them defend the reef. Against one wall is a stack of weapons; 35 tridents, 20 javelins, 2 light crossbows, and 10 quivers of 20 crossbow bolts in each. Next to the weapons is a ship's chest, slightly rusted but in good condition. It is not locked, and contains the mermen's hoard. Apart from 357sp, 208ep, 300gp, and 57pp the chest also contains a silver brooch with an inlaid design of a dragon's head in blue enamel (worth 250gp), a bronze quadrant with gold filigree work (worth 125gp), a gold statuette of a dolphin with one flipper missing, (worth 80gp) and a jewel-encrusted belt buckle (worth 200gp).

Area 6a, Side Chamber
The small chamber contains the bodies of four of the princess' warrior escort. From the condition of the bodies it would appear that parts of them have been used to feed the eels in the mermen's living quarters.

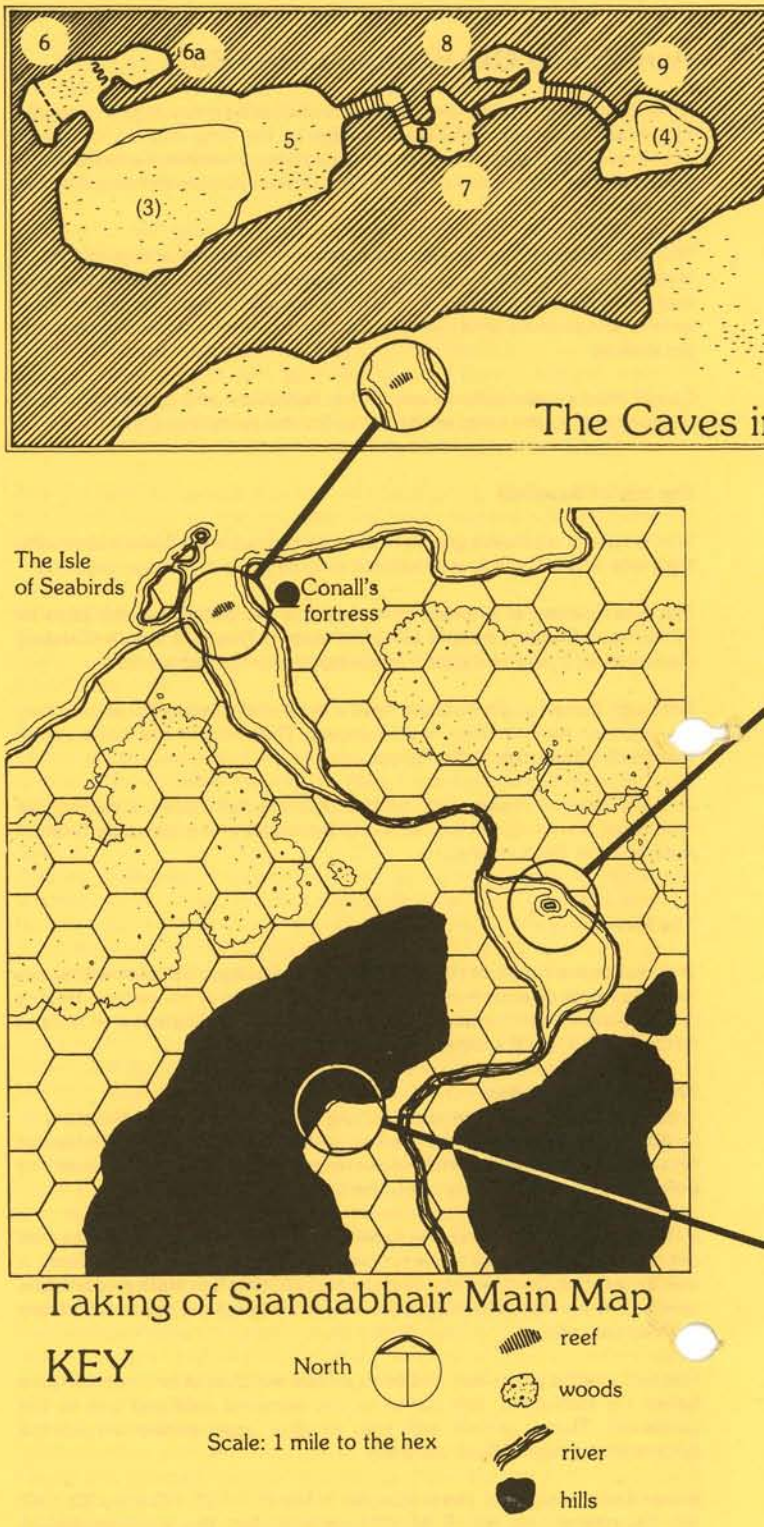
Area 7, Old Woman's Living Quarters
The Old Woman sleeps in this room. She is a Sea Hag, and wears a pair of **bracers of defence**, altering her armour class to 3. She is armed with a magical bodkin in the form of a long brooch-pin. It is the equivalent of a **dagger +2** (+4 vs druids). She also carries a **potion of delusion** in the belief that it is a **potion of healing**.

If alerted by the mermen, the Old Woman of the Bay (AC 3; MV 15"; HD 3; hp 20; # AT 1; D by weapon type; SA fright, death look; AL CE; S M; xp 660) may be encountered in area 5 with her pet sea lions. If encountered here she will attempt to retreat rather than fight alone. If trapped she will fight until she has lost 10hp and will then surrender, offering the following information in exchange for her life:

> 'It's a fine and gallant band of heroes you are indeed, to be picking on a poor old woman like myself, but your princess is gone to my sister of the Lough, and it's grown men, not boys, that Conall must send to fetch her back from there.

It is possible that the Old Woman will escape the reef through one of the two exits. However, in a chest in the room there lies a taunting document, bound by strands of Siandabhair's hair. This teasing waxed parchment contains the same information as she would have spoken. Also in the chest is the Old Woman's treasure of a tiara (worth 800gp), an underwater lute (100gp), 59 gold sailors' earrings — 4 anchor-shaped, the rest rings — (worth 5gp each), a brooch in the shape of a stag's head with small rubies for eyes (worth 250gp, the rubies are worth 10gp each) and a non-magical broadsword with gold hilt-work and inlay on the blade (worth 150gp).

The room also contains the mostly eaten remains of two of Siandabhair's warriors.

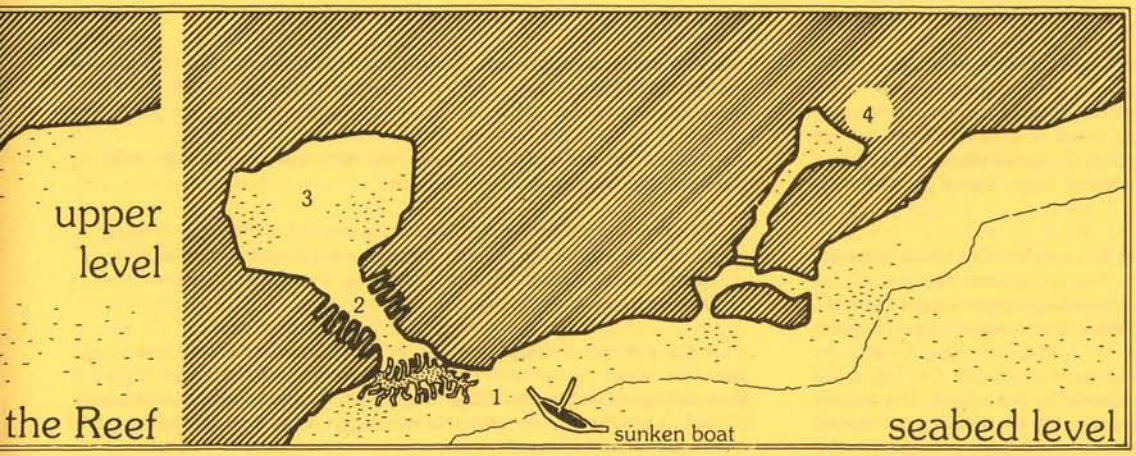


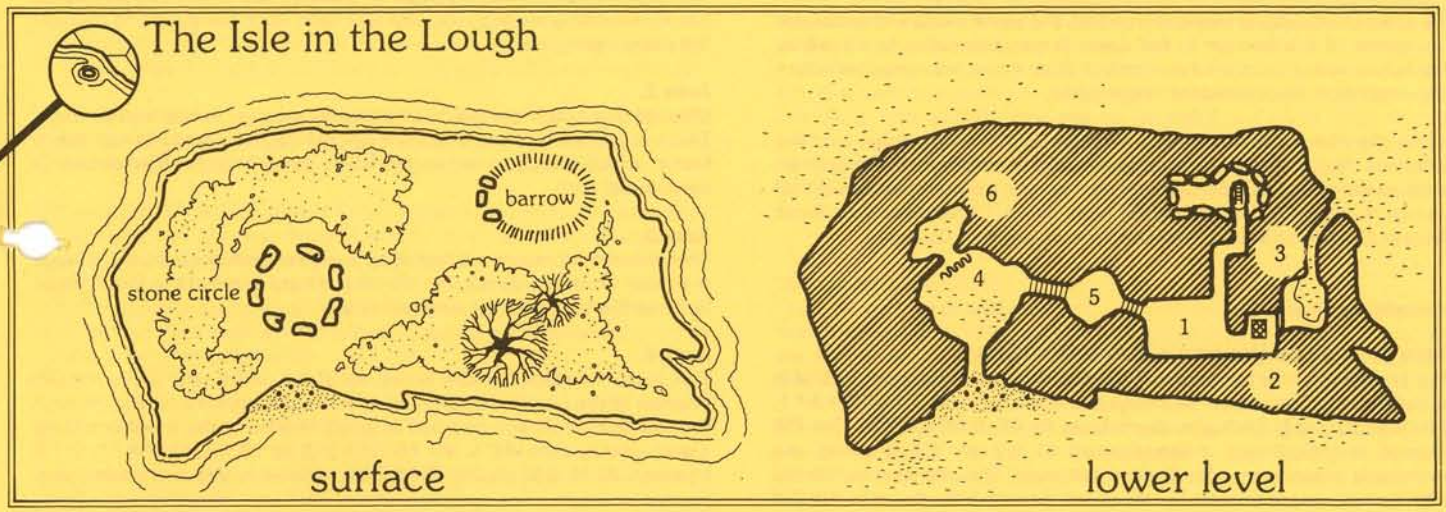
Area 8, The Store Chamber
This small side-chamber is a storeroom, containing the bodies of six of the drowned warriors, together with the arms and armour of the whole escort. Very little of the equipment is still usable after the massacre and exposure to sea water. However, there remains in usable condition a **helm of underwater action**, a **suit of chainmail +1**, a **ring of feather falling** and a **spear +2**.

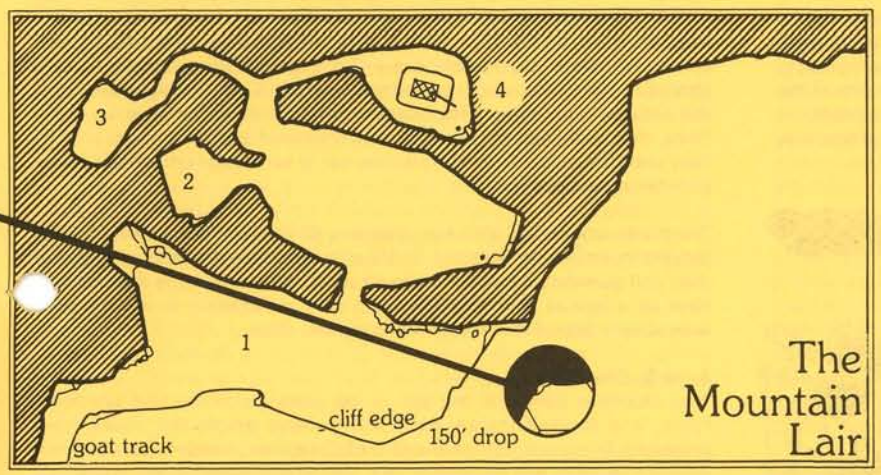
Area 9, The Sea Lions' Den
This chamber is the upper half of area 4 (The Small Chamber) on the lower level. It is used as a pen for the Old Woman's four sea lions. On the cavern floor are the remains of two of Siandabhair's escort. There is nothing of value in here.

The sea lions (AC 5/3; MV 18"; HD 6; hp 31, 26, 24, 22; # AT 3; D 1-6/1-6/2-12; AL N; S L; xp 336, 306, 294, 282) may be encountered with the Old Woman in The Upper Cavern (area 5) if Watch C were able to alert the rest of the reef.

This concludes Part II: The Old Woman of the Bay, and the first section of the adventure.







KEY

North

0 50ft Scale

door

stairs

secret door

weed curtain

cage

holding pen

scrub

pond weed

flooded area

strangleweed

Part 3: The Old Woman of the Lough

The Lough is a place well known throughout the realm. It has been shrouded in mystery since the dawn of time; spoken of in tones of fear for generations. The DM should tell the players that they will have heard many different reports of the place in the past. One thing all the tales have had in common: it is said that hidden in the mists which shroud the centre of the lough is an island. It has rarely been seen, and none who have ventured there have returned to tell of it.

If the party has returned to the fortress, Conall mac Éogan will thank the members for their efforts, and will beg them to continue their quest. He will pay no reward if the party presents him with the head of the Old Woman from the reef, but will promise them the weight of that head, and the head of the Old Woman of the Lough in gold for the safe return of his daughter.

Conall mac Éogan will offer to look after any treasure that the party has gained so far, and will not keep any of it for himself. He can offer little assistance to the party, beyond the provision of horses with which to reach the Lough and a waggon to carry boats to bear them to the island.

The Lough

The journey to the Lough will be uneventful.

The Lough is a dank and dismal place, its dark waters shrouded in mists even on the brightest summer day. It is surrounded by scrub oaks and yellowing grass tussocks, giving an impression of foreboding. Unlike many stretches of freshwater, the Lough is devoid of birdlife, save for crows and other carrion birds.

The Island

The Island in the Lough has several peculiar qualities. It sinks below the waters of the lough from time to time, and there is a 5% chance at any time that the island will be completely submerged. The island takes a long while to sink, and the change will be imperceptible to the party.

If the island is not submerged, the party will be able to see that is is not more than 50 or 60 yards across. The only visible features are a circle of standing stones (some four feet high) 25 feet in diameter, and a

barrow, about 30 feet long, 25 feet wide and 6 feet high.

If the island is submerged, or the party choose to approach underwater for another reason, they will see that there is a cave mouth on the southern side of the island, which never rises above the surface. There is also a secret entrance on the northern side, again permanently underwater.

Lawful and/or Good characters setting foot on the island must save vs. magic (Lawful Good characters save at -2) or be rejected by the island, ie be unable to proceed any further. If such characters are dragged, carried or otherwise forced onto the island, there will be a loud chilling scream and one manes (AC 7; MV 3"; HD 1; hp 5 each; # AT 3; D 1-2/1-2/1-4; SD +1 or better weapons to hit; AL CE; S S; xp 23 each) will appear for each character rejected by the island. The manes will attack the character(s) immediately. When killed, the manes assume gaseous form, giving off a nauseous odour, and will flee into the stone circle, disappearing.

The entry of any object made of iron into the stone circle will cause the door-stone of the barrow to fall open. It can otherwise by forced by characters with a combined strength of 30 or more; only two characters may attempt to force the door at one time.

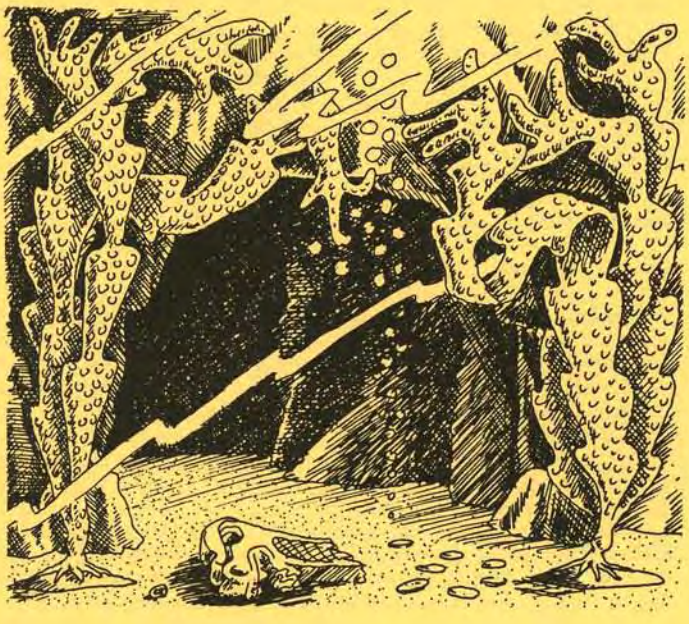
In the chamber of the barrow, a wooden ladder leads down into the darkness. The ladder is old and fairly rickety, and a throw should be made as thin wood vs. normal blow whenever a weight in excess of 150 pounds is placed on it. The ladder goes down 15 feet into a rock-cut passage leading to area 1, The Old Woman's Living Quarters.

Beneath the Island

Area 1, The Old Woman's Living Quarters

This chamber is the residence of the Old Woman of the Lough. She is one of the rare freshwater Sea Hags (AC 3; MV 15"; HD 3, hp 23; # AT 1; D by weapon type; SA fright, death look; AL CE; S M; xp 669). The Old Woman is armed with a **broadsword +1** (+2 vs. magic using and enchanted creatures — No Special Abilities). The chamber is littered with the remains of those who have been lured to their doom by the Old Woman and her nixies.

If alerted, the Old Woman will have stationed 1-8 nixies here to fight a rearguard action to hold up the party. She will be alerted by (a) fighting in area 4, the nixie's Lair, or (b) the party breaking down, or attempting to break down the barrow door, or (c) the ladder breaking and one of the party falling. She will lead the remainder out of one of the cavemouths in area 4, up to the surface and back into the fight via the barrow doorway — effectively trapping the party. This action will take 6 rounds. If the Old Woman is surprised here, she will use her death stare before fleeing towards the nearest of the three exits.



If she takes 12hp of damage or more, she will seek to surrender, offering the party the following to buy her life:

> 'It's a fine and gallant band of heroes you are indeed, to be picking on an old woman like myself, but your princess is gone to my sister of the mountains, and it's grown men, not boys, that Conall must send to fetch her back from there.'

If the party search through the litter in the chamber they will find a large polished silver mirror with gold filigree work (worth 100gp), a pair of jewelled earrings (worth 300gp), a gem encrusted bronze shield (worth 225gp), a small lump of mithril (worth 90gp), a pearl (worth 100gp), and a necklace made of jasper and carnelian stones (worth 125gp).

The Old Woman carries a **potion of clairoyance**. If she has attempted her surrounding manoeuvre, she will have used the potion to monitor the party's progress.

Area 2.
Most of this side-chamber is taken up by a large, empty bronze cage. There is just a 1 foot gap around it. On the floor is a scrap of rich white fabric, which the party will recognise as being from the Siandabhair's ceremonial garb.

Area 3.
This chamber contains a 8 foot deep pool. Beneath the surface, a 3 foot diameter tunnel leads out into the lake. If hard pressed the Old Woman will use the tunnel as an emergency exit.

Area 4.
This large, flooded chamber is the lair of the nixies who serve the Old Woman of the Lough. The concealed entrance from the lake is through the southern wall, across a bed of weed. Hidden in the weed are three giant water spiders (AC 5; MV 15"; HD 3+3; hp 18, 13, 11; # AT 1; D 1-4 + poison; AL N; S M; xp 262, 242, 234), trained to attack any intruders.

Fourteen nixies (AC 7; MV 6"//12"; HD 1-4hp; hp 4(x4), 3(x2), 2(x4), 1(x4); # AT 1; D by weapon type; SA **charm**; AL N; S S; xp 36(x4), 35(x2), 34(x4), 33(x4)) serve the Old Woman, and they have two giant pike (AC 5; MV 36"; HD 4; hp 18, 15; # AT 1; D 4-16; AL N; S L; xp 157, 145) at their command. Their allegiance to the Old Woman is not strong; only a shared delight in causing trouble for humans holds them together. Thus, the nixies will not fight to the death in defence of the Old Woman. If she flees, they will seek to retreat. If this course of action is not available, they will surrender. They will also retreat or surrender once half of their number have been killed.

The nixies are armed with long daggers (D 1-4) and darts (D 1-3). They delight in enslaving humans. If 10 or more are encountered together they will generate a powerful **charm** spell, which requires the victim to save vs. magic at -2. In this situation, they are unlikely to use the spell unless very few of the adventurers are left alive.

Area 5, Chamber
This chamber connects the lair of the nixies with the Old Woman's room, and is used mainly for holding those whom the nixies have charmed. There is a 15% chance that 1-3 captive peasants (level 0 men; AC10; 4hp each) will be held in here. If so, the prisoner(s) will know that the princess has been taken to the lair of the Old Woman of the Mountains.

Area 6, Treasure Chamber
This flooded chamber is where the nixies keep their treasure. The glint of precious metal and gems can be seen through the loosely-woven curtain of pond-weed which hangs across the doorway. Also in the chamber is a giant water beetle (AC 3; MV 3"/12"; HD 4; hp 29; # AT 1; D 3-18; AL N; S L; xp 201), guarding the treasure. It will attack any who enter without first throwing food in past the curtain. If the curtain is held back, it may (30% chance) seek to escape its confinement without attacking those present.

The treasure consists of a gold torc (worth 300gp), a gem encrusted sword scabbard (slightly damaged, but still worth 275gp), a helm in the shape of a boar's head (worth 110gp), two ceremonial daggers (worth 50gp each), 208gp, 468sp, 245cp, and seven gems — two onyx (worth 50gp each), three ambers (worth 100gp each), an amethyst (worth 100gp), and a piece of jet (worth 240gp). There are also 9 nixie spears.

This concludes Part 3: The Old Woman of the Lough, and the second section of the adventure.

Part 4: The Old Woman of the Mountains

If the party overcomes the denizens of the Lough without discovering that the princess has been taken to the lair of the Old Woman of the Mountains, they may feel that their quest is at an end. If they return to the fortress of Conall mac Éogan, however, they will be told by Cormac mac Culinan, the King's bard, that since the Old Woman of the Bay and the Old Woman of the Lough have been proven to be involved, it is likely that their sister, the Old Woman of the Mountains, will also be a party to the abduction. He will be able to give directions to the place where she is known to live.

Conall mac Éogan will be very anxious now for the safety of his daughter, and will freely replace the horses and rations of the party. No other assistance is available.

Even if the party produce the head of the Old Woman of the Lough, they will receive no reward. The king entreats them to try once more to rescue his daughter, promising them the weight in gold of all three of the sisters' heads if they succeed.

MOUNT BEINNMARBH

The journey to the foothills beneath the lair of the Old Woman of the Mountains on top of Mount Beinnmarbh will be uneventful. This particular part of Conall's realm is, however, wilder and less law abiding. The Old Woman of the Mountains is the best known of the three sisters, having always been a threat to the law of the kingdom. Several foolish heroes and unwary travellers have perished at her hands. Her cave lair is reached by a goat-track from the road that brings the party to the foothills.

The approach of the party will be seen by the Old Woman's familiar, a crow (AC 7; MV 12"; hp 3), which is sitting on top of a tall stone at the junction of the road and the goat track.

Unless stopped, this bird will warn her of the approach of the party. The Old Woman will do nothing to hinder the party's progress along the path, but will wait until they are within bowshot of the cave before hailing them thus:

> 'So! Conall sends his puppies after the strayed bitch, then? If you want her, you must fight my seven sons for her, or bring Conall on his knees with fitting compensation for my two sisters.'

The party will then see the Old Woman's sons move into sight at the mouth of the cave, on a ledge at the end of the track above them.

Area 1, The Ledge
Once the party has climbed the remainder of the track, they will reach the ledge outside the cave mouth. This narrow egress is barred by seven grimlocks — the Old Woman's sons (AC 5; MV 12"; HD 2; hp 16, 15, 12, 11, 9; # AT 1; D 1-6 or by weapon type; SD immunity to effects of spells affecting visual nerves; AL NE; S M; xp 60, 58, 58, 52, 50, 46).

The grimlocks will wait for the party to advance up to the ledge to fight. Once battle is joined, the Old Woman — a Mountain Hag (AC 7; MV 15"; HD 5+5; hp 36; # AT 1; D by weapon type; SA see Part 5; SD see Part 5; AL CE; S M; xp 114) armed with a dagger (D 1-4) — will go into the Side Chamber (area 2) and call her pack of six dire wolves (see below for their statistics) to her side. She will then drink her **potion of invisibility** and retreat to a suitable ambush in the Main Cave (area 4).

Area 2, The Side Chamber
This is the lair of the Old Woman's dire wolves (AC 6; MV 18"; HD 3+3; hp 27, 23, 20, 16, 15, 13; # AT 1; D 2-8; AL N; S M; xp 168, 152, 140, 124, 120, 112), strewn with rubbish and the broken bones of their victims.

Area 3, The Old Woman's Living Chamber
This is the Old Woman's personal chamber, and contains a filthy straw mattress and a stout wooden chest. The chest is not locked and contains a silver harp (worth 600gp), an ivory drinking cup inlaid with a dragon design in gold (worth 245gp), a normal longsword (worth 15gp), a bronze and silver helm with intricate lacquer work (worth 315gp), a six-fingered silver gauntlet (worth 400gp), a suit of gilded chainmail suitable for a boy or a young woman (worth 240gp), two topaz (worth 200gp and 175gp respectively), a garnet (worth 400gp), a black opal (worth 1000gp), a vial containing a **philtre of love** (3 doses), a flask containing a **potion of ESP**, and an **arrow of direction**.

The Old Woman carries a flask containing two doses of a **potion of invisibility** on her person.

Area 4, Main Cave
In the centre of this room is a steep-sided, 20 feet deep, occupied by two cave bears (AC 6; MV 12"; HD 6+6; hp 34, 31; # AT 3; D 1-8/1-8/1-12; AL N; S L; xp 987, 963). Hanging over the pit is a bronze cage containing Siandabhair (AC 10; MV 12"; 0-level human; hp 5; # AT 0; D 0; S 10; I 15; W 13; D 13; Co 14; Ch 18; AL N), who is frightened but unhurt. The cage is secured by a rope from a ceiling hook, lashed to a cleat at the east side of the pit.

If the party defeats the grimlocks and enters this area, the Old Woman will be found behind the barrier of her dire wolves. She will be placing a lighted candle under the rope, which will burn through in d6+12 rounds. She will cackle and shriek the following at the party:

> 'Do you not think that you had better be ready to catch your princess when she falls?'

She will attempt to keep the members of the party at bay until the rope burns through. The Old Woman will use her powers to delay the party rather than fighting to kill. She wants the party to see the princess die. Afterwards, she intends to finish the party off, taking one prisoner to send back to Conall with a taunting message and a report of what occurred. This individual will probably also be infected with the disease from her dagger, which should be treated as mildly contagious (see the **DMG** p13), and **cursed** as well (see Part 5 for full details). This survivor will be stripped of all weapons and armour except for one dagger.

If in danger of defeat before the candle can burn through, the Old Woman will seek to flee by flying. If she is mortally wounded, she will **curse** her slayer with her dying breath.

In addition to her own powers (detailed in full in Part 5), and her **potion of invisibility**, the Old Woman has two magical items. The first is a magic user scroll with the spells **web** and **slow**, and the second is a medallion which ensures that the first blow the wearer attempts against an enemy will hit, while an enemy's first blow will always miss.

And Finally....

Conall mac Éogan's reactions to the party depend upon whether his daughter is still alive, but no matter what, he will honour his vow to give the party the weight of each head in gold (an equivalent of 1500gp each).

If Siandabhair is dead, Conall will immediately confiscate all the party's treasure, except the gold for the heads, and exile the party from his lands forever. He will declare them cowards and outlaws.

If Siandabhair is returned alive and unharmed, Conall will offer her hand in marriage to the male member of the party with the highest charisma and the party will be given the right to sit at the King's table. Conall will also command Cormac mac Culinan to compose an epic poem of the party's adventure. Conall will return any treasure that the party gave him for safekeeping.

This ends Part 4: The Old Woman of the Mountains, and **The Taking of Siandabhair**.

CREDITS

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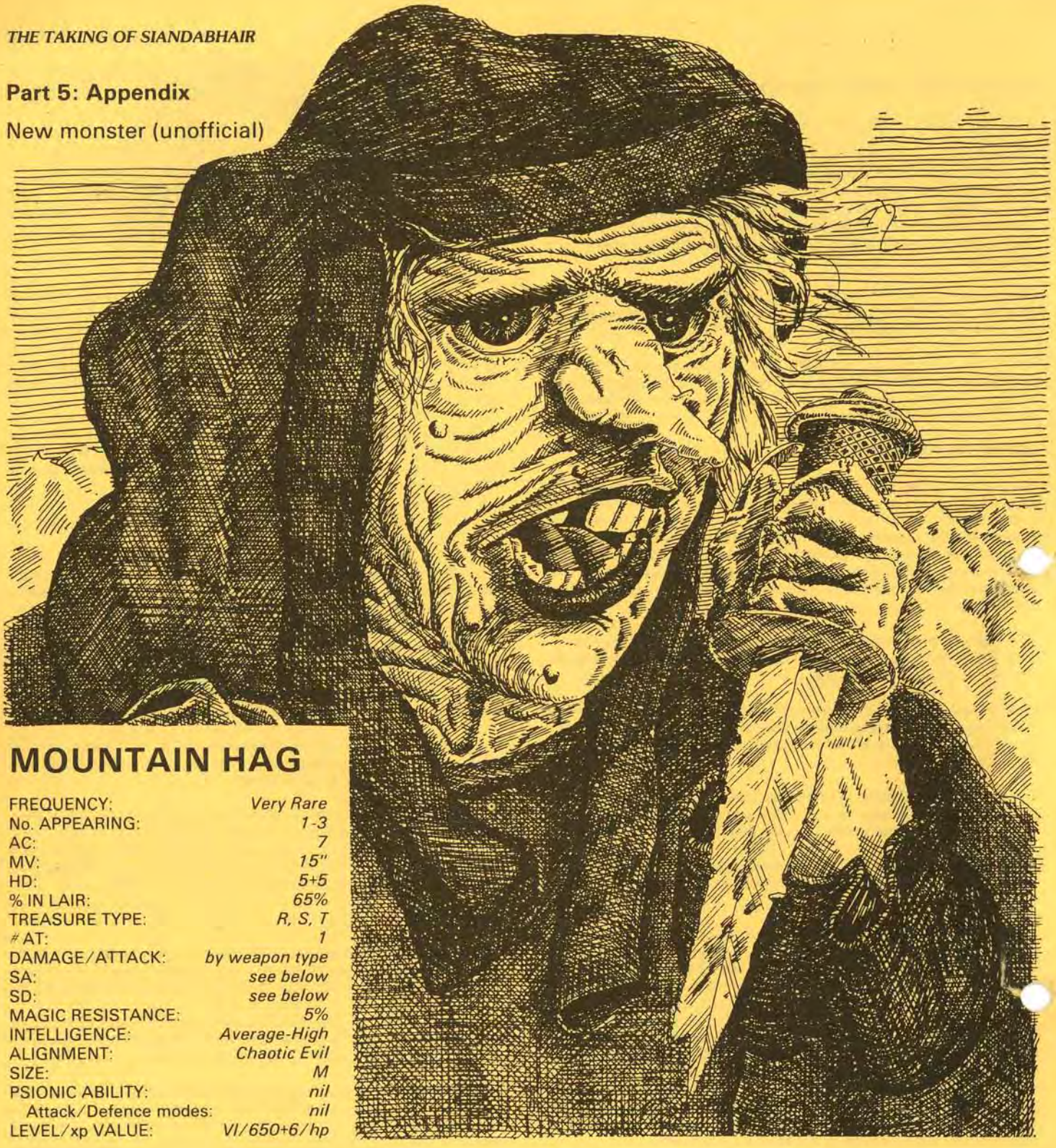
Thanks to:	Cú Chulainn, Giraldus Cambrensis and nameless others for inspiration

Part 5: Appendix

New monster (unofficial)



MOUNTAIN HAG

FREQUENCY:	*Very Rare*
No. APPEARING:	*1-3*
AC:	*7*
MV:	*15"*
HD:	*5+5*
% IN LAIR:	*65%*
TREASURE TYPE:	*R, S, T*
# AT:	*1*
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	*by weapon type*
SA:	*see below*
SD:	*see below*
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	*5%*
INTELLIGENCE:	*Average-High*
ALIGNMENT:	*Chaotic Evil*
SIZE:	*M*
PSIONIC ABILITY:	*nil*
Attack/Defence modes:	*nil*
LEVEL/xp VALUE:	*VI/650+6/hp*

The Mountain Hag is a relative of the Sea Hag, inhabiting mountains and dismal rocky wastes. The lair of the Mountain Hag is typically a cave in a mountainside. Like all other Hags, they hate beauty and goodness, and when they come out of their caves it is always to commit some act of evil.

The appearance of a Mountain Hag is so hideous as to require any character of less than 5th level to save vs magic or lose 1-10 strength points for 1-8 turns; Clerics and Paladins are allowed a bonus to this saving throw equal to their level.

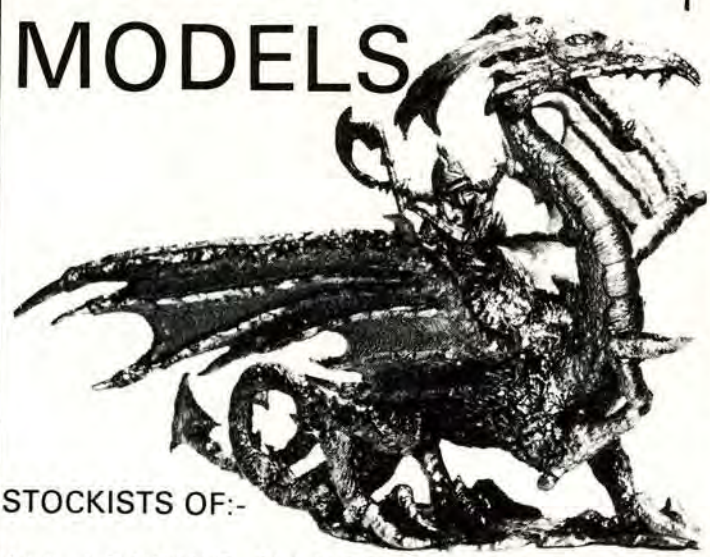
The Mountain Hag fights using a filthy, jagged and rusty dagger (D 1-4), which has a 75% chance of carrying a disease (treat as chronic, severe, affecting blood and gastro-intestinal organs — see **Dungeon Masters Guide** p14). However, a Mountain Hag will rely whenever possible on followers and on her magical abilities, fighting hand-to-hand only as a last resort to clear a path for her escape.

A Mountain Hag can **fly**, 1/day, paralyse (as a **wand of paralysation**) by touch, 3 times/day, and cause **darkness**, 3 times/day. She can use magic-user scrolls as a 10th level thief, and can also **speak with animals** at will. There is a 30% chance that a Mountain Hag will have a familiar, of a type determined as for the first level magic-user spell **find familiar**.

A Mountain Hag may call down a terrible **curse** on one victim, who must save vs magic or lose 1-4 constitution points, and must make all subsequent saving throws vs poison or disease at -2 while the curse is in effect. Any wound sustained during this period will heal at half the normal rate, and has a 25% chance of becoming infected. The curse lasts for one lunar month or until the victim dies or receives a **remove curse** spell. A Mountain Hag may only have one **curse** in effect at any given time.

Finally, Mountain Hags are immune to poison and disease, and make all saving throws against mind-influencing spells at +2.

SOUTHSEA MODELS



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The Bargain Basement (lair of the infamous Karen) is the place where we consign all the stock which, for some reason or other, can no longer be sold as 'perfect'. The degree of imperfection varies from a missing shrink-wrap to the lack of a page in a module, for example. The items all have two things in common, however, they are all on sale at amazingly reduced prices and none of them is rubbish.

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Mill Days are open to PA members only. There is no fee but places must be booked in advance. For details, write to 'Players Association Mill Days' at the address below, enclosing an SAE.

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D&D® PLAYERS ASSOCIATION NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE BRITISH DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® PLAYERS ASSOCIATION

PAN PIPINGS

I have just written a letter to accompany a package. Inside the package was a module, and the letter was to tell the author that TSR can't publish it. I didn't enjoy writing the letter, and the author will not enjoy reading it, so why was it written and why do we write other letters like it?

The answer, I think, has little to do with the modules we receive being 'good' or 'bad' as such. Many DMs design and run an adventure which their players enjoy very much. The problems start when one of these players comes out with the line 'Why don't you send it in to...?'

The step from 'adventure' to 'module' is a very big one, so I am taking this opportunity to help (I hope) prospective authors. These words to the wise are mainly concerned with full-size D&D® and AD&D™ modules, but most of the points are just as applicable to other systems and smaller offerings (eg for magazines).

Let's begin by looking at what a module is. It is *all* the information (barring the rules) needed by *any* DM and group of players to experience and *enjoy* a role-playing adventure. The words 'all', 'any' and 'enjoy' form the basis of what follows.

Before you even start, make sure you know what you are letting yourself in for. A 32-page module requires about 100-120 pages of double-spaced typescript. Even a magazine 8-pager runs to about 7000 words. It is also an idea to look at some of the latest releases. These will give you some idea of what is needed.

Next, devise a plot, nurture it carefully until it reaches maturity and then stick to it. The plot is your best friend. Not a great long rambling thing like some re-run of *War & Peace*, of course, nor a straitjacket which forces players to follow a pre-determined line rigidly (though some sense of what they should do, and the means to encourage/tempt them to do it are desirable). A plot is basically a logically consistent set of reasons for things happening or creatures being there. It helps you when you are writing because NPCs, monsters, treasures, buildings, etc arise almost spontaneously from it — what's more, they 'feel right'.

The other advantage of a clear plot is that it helps you take your idea from being an adventure to run yourself, to a module for other people to run. It's not only the plot which needs to be clear, of course; everything has to be readable, complete and well laid out. Format (layout and conventions if you like) can make or break a module. A badly formatted module has to be practically re-written from scratch (I know, I've done it!) but conscientious presentation can make up for a lot.

On the layout side, the section most often skimped is the introduction. Most people can follow the technical details and descriptions in a module if they are led to them gently. Amongst other things, the introduction should describe the background, scope and plot of the module, the level and types of adventurer it is for, abbreviations and conventions used, a means of introducing players to the adventure and some idea of where to find information (a 'Contents', if you like).

Each game has its own conventions which come and go. Some are well-established, however, like the boxed sections and abbreviations for stats in the Basic and Advanced games.

When it comes to submitting work, modules should preferably be typed (double-sp ced), but this is not essential. Maps should be clear, with a key and a scale. They are always redrawn for publication, so don't go mad on them.

So much for the mechanics. With luck, these guidelines should help to make a module work, but what they can't do is to make it good. That's up to you!

Graeme Morris

DISPEL CONFUSION

Dispel Confusion is a question and answer column intended to help hobby gamers overcome problems they have had with game rules.

At present, we can only help with games produced by TSR; while our answers may not be fully 'official', we have contact with the designers themselves. In future, we hope to cover games other than TSR products, by getting answers from those who make and design them.

But we always need questions – so send your queries to: **Players Association (Dispel Confusion), TSR UK Ltd, The Mill, Rathmore Road, CAMBRIDGE CB1 4AD.**

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® and ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® games

Q. Which of the Barbarian classes is 'official' — the one in IMAGINE™ magazine or the one that appeared in **White Dwarf** # 4. Why are the two so different? (Advanced)

A. The question of 'official/unofficial' is a contentious one. As far as we are concerned rules changes and additions are only official if they are written by Gary Gygax or approved by him. After all, he did invent the game in the first place. This is not to say that things that other people create are wrong, they are only unofficial.

Therefore, the Gary Gygax Barbarian is the official one.

The two are so different because they are interpretations by different people at different times.

Q. If a dragon is captured at a very young age can it be tamed as a mount, and if so will its alignment be the same as the characters who trained it, or will it stay the same as detailed in the rules? (Basic/Advanced)

A. Yes it is possible to capture and train a dragon. This is a long and risky business. To begin with dragons are hard to subdue, and even harder to keep subdued. There are rules in the D&D® Basic rulebook and AD&D™ **Monster Manual** to cover this. Secondly, dragons take a long time to mature, and a very young dragon can take twenty years or more to reach adulthood. We doubt that any player character would have the time to devote to a task like this.

Even if a dragon was successfully captured and trained it would retain the alignment of its birth.

Q. Are there any tables for random encounters for monsters from the FIEND FOLIO™ Tome, and if there are where are they? (Advanced)

A. Yes, the FIEND FOLIO Tome includes comprehensive tables which cover both its monsters and those from the Monster Manual.

Q. Are Rangers affected by unholy water in the same way as Paladins? (Advanced)

A. No. Paladins are affected by unholy water only because of their extreme piety, which grants them a number of benefits. This is one of the drawbacks. Rangers, although good, are not so extreme in their powers or beliefs.

Q. Can a character who becomes schizophrenic due to a psionic attack, or other effect, continue in his or her class if one of the new personalities has an alignment which is inconsistent with the character's original class? (Advanced)

A. In general the original class is retained for all the new personalities which have a suitable alignment, and the original personality is not affected. Personalities which have an unsuitable alignment will believe themselves members of a different class. They will not actually have the powers of the class concerned, but will delude themselves that they possess these powers.

In the case of a Paladin with schizophrenia, an evil act performed by one of the new personalities would not lead to loss of class by the original personality, because it has not been 'knowingly performed'.

Q. If a **Ring of Warmth** and a **Ring of Fire Resistance** are worn at the same time, will the effects be cancelled, reduced or normal? (Advanced)

A. The effects of the two rings are entirely normal. While they both function during extreme temperature

TURNBULL TALKING

I have often been asked how and when this gaming hobby started in the UK. This casts me pretty firmly in the role of wrinkled, aged dodderer — which sits unhappily on my 27 years.... give or take a bit.... but I can't really object to the supposition, having been around at the beginning of the hobby's spectacular surge. So here's my viewpoint and my perspective.

First, though, the scene-setter. I have no intention of tracing the hobby back to the origins of chess (a game, after all, though even I wasn't around then) or even to the 'miniature wargame', excellent hobby though it is. Here the scope must be limited, and in an arbitrary and no doubt irritating way I will concentrate on board/table games which are more than family pastimes, which have attracted 'fans' or 'enthusiasts' who display more-than-average enthusiasm and commitment, and which are post World War II in origin.

In the beginning there was Diplomacy. An American game (most of the good games are American) and one which still attracts a lot of interest. What appeared to be the failing of the game was the need for seven players and perhaps ten hours of playing time, but from the hobby point of view this turned out to be a great strength since it promoted the foundation of the postal gaming hobby (actually, it's a better game by post, too). Not only did this advent of postal gaming allow a good game to be played by a wider group than face-to-face would have permitted, but it carried out the much more important task of putting games enthusiasts nation-wide in touch with each other. Be of no doubt — the present hobby owes a great deal to the first postal gamers, for they were the ones who started the snowball down the long slope. (If you are interested in knowing more about the postal hobby, Brian Creese's article in the last issue is an excellent place to start.)

Then there were the board wargames — first from Avalon Hill then from a sizeable number of other publishers. These, too, attracted a postal following as well as face-to-face players; like Diplomacy, they generated magazines, clubs and conventions. Virtually without exception these, too, were American.

At about the same time, the UK became aware of non-war games (also mainly from America) such as those designed by the inimitable Sid Sackson (**Acquire** is a classic) and by companies such as 3M, Gamut of Games, Avalon Hill (try their **Business Game**), Urban Systems (ecology games such as **Smog**), Harwell and

conditions, they work at opposite ends of the scale, and so their effects do not overlap. Don't forget that it is only possible to wear two rings at once and still have them operate. Toes and pierced ears will not do.

Q. Why isn't there a list of magic-user spell prices in the DMG? (Advanced)

A. Because magic-user spells are never bought in that sense. The detailed recipe for casting a spell may be bartered for, usually with details of other spells (see DMG p39). The amounts of cash involved are small, with magic items and (much more importantly for a magic-user) magical knowledge being the chief currency.

When magic-user characters progress in level they must engage in a period of training under a higher level magic-user, which is paid for in cash. Subsumed into the cost of this training is the acquisition of another spell.

Clerical spells have given prices, but the price is for the effect of the spell, rather than the spell itself.

Q. Why isn't everything that is available in America for the D&D game available in the UK? (Basic/Advanced)

A. Most products are eventually made available in the UK. However, TSR prints all its products (except for IMAGINE magazine) in America, and then goods are imported into Britain in batches, which means that there is some delay until a new shipment arrives in the UK and becomes available in the shops.

STARFRONTIERS™ Rules Questions

Q. In 'How to create a character — Summary' on p4, rule 5 states that 'No more than 10 points may be shifted in this way'. Does this mean a maximum of 10 points in each pair, or 10 points overall?

A. Looking at the suggested characters in SF-0, for example, it seems that the limit is 10 points overall, but that this can be used to alter more than one pair.

DRAGONQUEST™ Rules Questions

Q. In the second edition rulebook, the Weapons Chart (20.2 note C) states that any hit with a Sap by someone with Assassin skill automatically knocks out an opponent. However, rules 16.5 and 51.7 say that the Assassin skill only gives a character an increased chance of knocking out an opponent. Which is correct?

A. It seems quite unreasonable to apply the rule in the Weapons Chart. We suggest that this rule is superceded by 16.5 and 51.7, otherwise any character with 625 Experience Points to spare would spend them on Rank 0 Sap and Assassin, and then simply cosh opponents into submission.

Graeme Morris & Mike Brunton

Sinauer Associates (try **Extinction** if you can get hold of it). Books on games began to appear — Sid Sackson's **A Gamut of Games**, for example, which has even more for the games hobbyist than the title would suggest.

This was ten years ago. Some would say this was the halcyon age of the hobby — it was quite small and maybe regarded itself as select, there were some darned talented designers producing new and intriguing games on a huge spread of topics without ever causing a feeling of 'déja vu', games collections were in the making (and at that time were possible without bankruptcy) and a new and exciting spirit was abroad.

Then in 1974 came DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® — the first ever fantasy role-playing game — and this shifted the hobby into an even higher gear. Though other types of game in the 'hobby' area have been published in copious quantities since then, it's a safe bet that the major concentration and growth has belonged to the role-playing part of the hobby.

There — I said the history had to be potted, but there's enough meat here to be spread further in this column in future if readers want to know more detail.

Only one sad fact strikes me in all this — the low incidence of good UK games. There are a few, of course: David Watts' **Railway Rivals**; **Seastrike**; **Kingmaker**; a good game trying to get out of **Escape from Colditz**; **Black Box** — and the peerless **1829** from Francis Tresham. But in general UK gamers have had to rely on their transatlantic brethren for the major initiatives. There are various opinions, most of them pretty critical, of why this should be so.

But brushing aside that one sad tear, I've never enjoyed myself so much as in the time since this terrific hobby set foot on UK soil.

Don Turnbull

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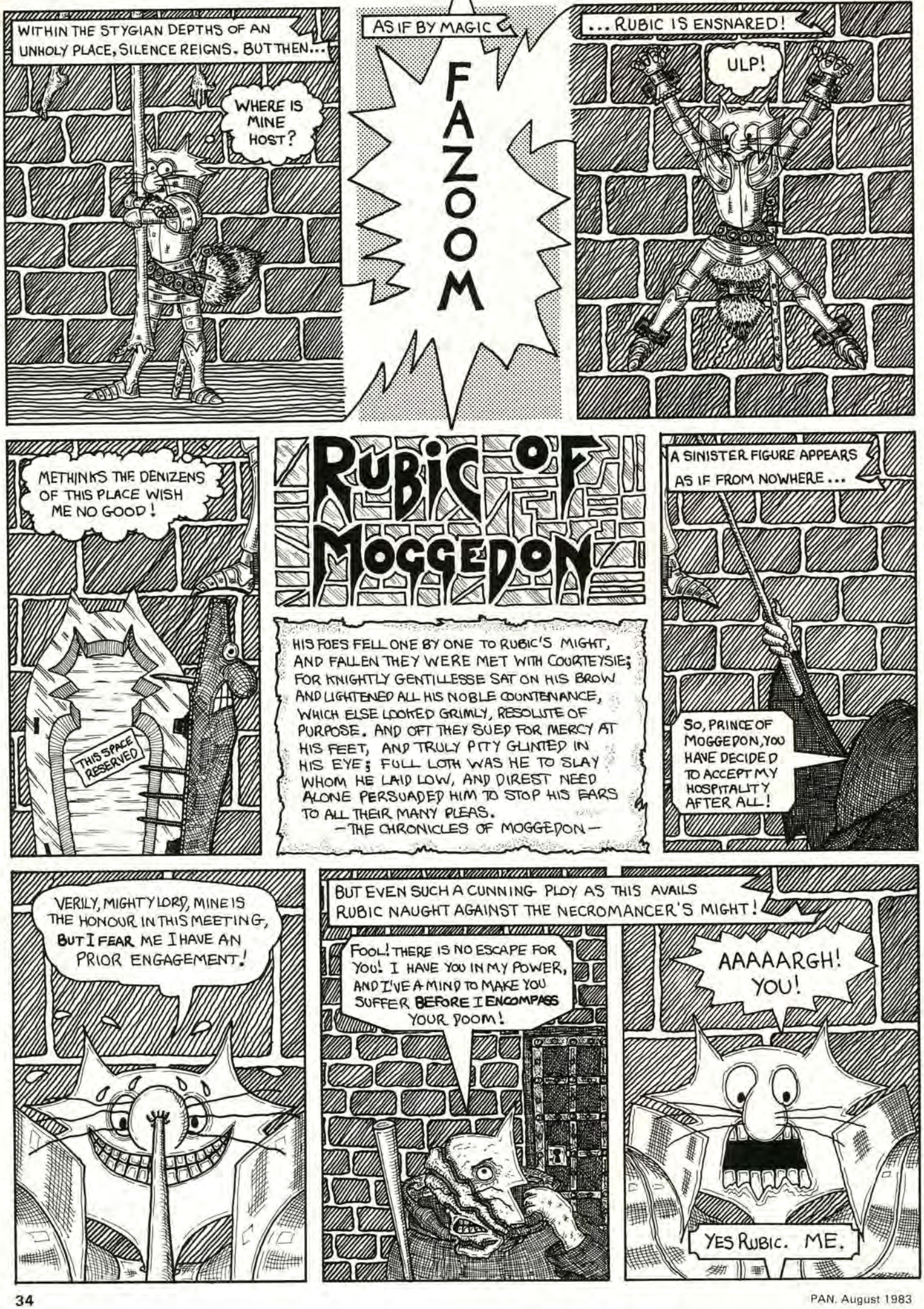
WITHIN THE STYGIAN DEPTHS OF AN UNHOLY PLACE, SILENCE REIGNS. BUT THEN...
WHERE IS MINE HOST?
AS IF BY MAGIC
FAZOOM
... RUBIC IS ENSNARED!
ULP!
METHINKS THE DENIZENS OF THIS PLACE WISH ME NO GOOD!
THIS SPACE RESERVED
RUBIC OF MOGGEDON
HIS FOES FELL ONE BY ONE TO RUBIC'S MIGHT, AND FALLEN THEY WERE MET WITH COURTEYSIE; FOR KNIGHTLY GENTILLESSE SAT ON HIS BROW AND LIGHTENED ALL HIS NOBLE COUNTENANCE, WHICH ELSE LOOKED GRIMLY, RESOLUTE OF PURPOSE. AND OFT THEY SUED FOR MERCY AT HIS FEET, AND TRULY PITY GLINTED IN HIS EYE; FULL LOTH WAS HE TO SLAY WHOM HE LAID LOW, AND DIREST NEED ALONE PERSUADED HIM TO STOP HIS EARS TO ALL THEIR MANY PLEAS.
—THE CHRONICLES OF MOGGEDON—
A SINISTER FIGURE APPEARS AS IF FROM NOWHERE...
SO, PRINCE OF MOGGEDON, YOU HAVE DECIDED TO ACCEPT MY HOSPITALITY AFTER ALL!
VERILY, MIGHTY LORD, MINE IS THE HONOUR IN THIS MEETING, BUT I FEAR ME I HAVE AN PRIOR ENGAGEMENT!
BUT EVEN SUCH A CUNNING PLOY AS THIS AVAILS RUBIC NAUGHT AGAINST THE NECROMANCER'S MIGHT!
FOOL! THERE IS NO ESCAPE FOR YOU! I HAVE YOU IN MY POWER, AND I'VE A MIND TO MAKE YOU SUFFER BEFORE I ENCOMPASS YOUR DOOM!
AAAAARGH! YOU!
YES RUBIC. ME.

The Imagination Machine

by Mike Costello

Which Micro?

Some readers of IMAGINE™ magazine will have already taken the plunge and chosen a home micro, but they are bound to be outnumbered by those who are still undecided. Which is the best buy among the various competing machines on the market?

The most important question is: are you going to write your own program, or just use commercial games software? Unfortunately, most people find this out only after they have had a computer for a few months. Many buy a machine with the intention of learning to program and, for one reason or another, end up playing other people's games. On the other hand, many of the more successful programmers started out playing commercial games, became dissatisfied with the quality of the software on the market, and decided they could do as well or better. You might react by hedging your bets, or decide on a minimum-risk approach — which really means going out and buying a ZX81, the cheapest computer on the market. You can always sell it and move on to something better in due course.

There are five main considerations to bear in mind:

Availability of software. If there are 500 games available for a particular micro, there is a good chance that you can find about *five* that fit your particular tastes and are of sufficient quality. A number of the best-selling machines pose no difficulty in this respect, but beware of the more specialised computers which have not attracted the attentions of the software houses. Read magazine advertising to get an idea of the amount of software that will run on each machine. Check the prices being asked; it may not be a good idea to buy a micro that can run on any of several hundred cartridge games, and then realise that they cost £25 each. Joining a software library, or participating in a buy-back arrangement, is a solution to this problem, but of course you will never actually build up a collection of games that you want to return to.

Availability of peripherals. This really means extra memory, a printer, additional languages or possibly such an interesting novelty as a speech synthesis board. You need one or more of these but cannot afford them yet; you can always buy them when you are ready. But will the manufacturer be ready when you are? Some of the expansion units that manufacturers of certain computers promised have been delayed so long that the basic machines are already becoming obsolete. Then there is the problem of the manufacturer who sub-contracts the production of peripherals to an independent company, which then goes out of business. Remember that it is always more expensive to assemble a sophisticated configuration from a number of separate units than to buy a complete single-box system in the first place.

A further word of caution on this point: be suspicious of **'bargain machines'** with a small amount of RAM. RAM chips are so cheap nowadays as to be effectively free to the manufacturer and he can as easily give you 48K as 4K. If he does not, it means either that he wants to tie you to the machine and then sell you expensive memory enhancements, or that he wants you to buy software on expensive ROM cartridges rather than cheap cassette tapes. Look for a machine that accepts software in standard formats rather than in a format unique to one manufacturer.

Amount of user memory. This means, in practice, the amount of memory available to hold a BASIC program after allowing for the RAM taken up with the video display, system variables, etc. You will need at least 16K for all applications other than running simple arcade games. The amount of user memory on a machine, defined in this way, may be as little as a third of the amount quoted in advertisements; read the small print.

Falling prices. Will the machine you buy become significantly cheaper, just after you have paid for it? Yes, and there is nothing you can do about it. As soon as a manufacturer has recovered the development costs of a new micro, he will cut the price to stay competitive with all the other manufacturers; competition is becoming fiercer all the time. Home computers are now about four times cheaper than they were three years ago (it's true) and there is no end in sight.

One of the commonest types of letter I receive as editor of **War Machine** asks some variation on the question 'I play games, which computer should I buy? However, whichever machine I recommend, the enquirer will often buy the latest micro to be launched on the market. Here are points to bear in mind when considering buying a very new machine:

Accept that there will be no software worth loading for the first year. That seems a long time, but most software houses will not bother with a machine until there are plenty of users. After all, it may never catch on. And the first wave of software will be rewrites of games already available for other computers; rewriting a game is cheaper than designing one from scratch. Of course, if it turns out that there is something wrong with the computer, the software houses may steer clear of it altogether.

If you want to program, you will be looking for a powerful BASIC (at least 12K), plenty of memory, good documentation and a compatible printer. If you intend to play ready-to-run games, some machines are more suitable than others for particular types of game. If you prefer graphic adventures, there are probably more of them for the **Apple** than any other machine. However, apart from the fact that the Apple IIe is hopelessly overpriced, most of the software is American and tends to cost about three times as much as software from British sources. Many Apple programs are being re-written for the Atari, but this machine presents a very unfriendly environment for anyone trying to write their own software for it, as the BASIC is not up to handling the very sophisticated graphic capabilities of this computer. At the lower end of the market, a calculator-style keyboard may be acceptable — but not if you intend to type in long listings from magazines.

I hope I have not discouraged readers with this discussion of the pitfalls in the path of the first-time computer buyer. Most micros are excellent value in terms of the computing power they offer. There is no single best buy, but you should be able to decide which machine is best suited to your interests — as soon as you work out exactly what you expect a computer to do for you.

Mike Costello

Mike Costello will be back in issue 7 with predictions about likely developments in the home computer market, and the opportunities these will bring for more imaginative types of computer game.

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as reviewed in

WHITE DWARF Nº 37

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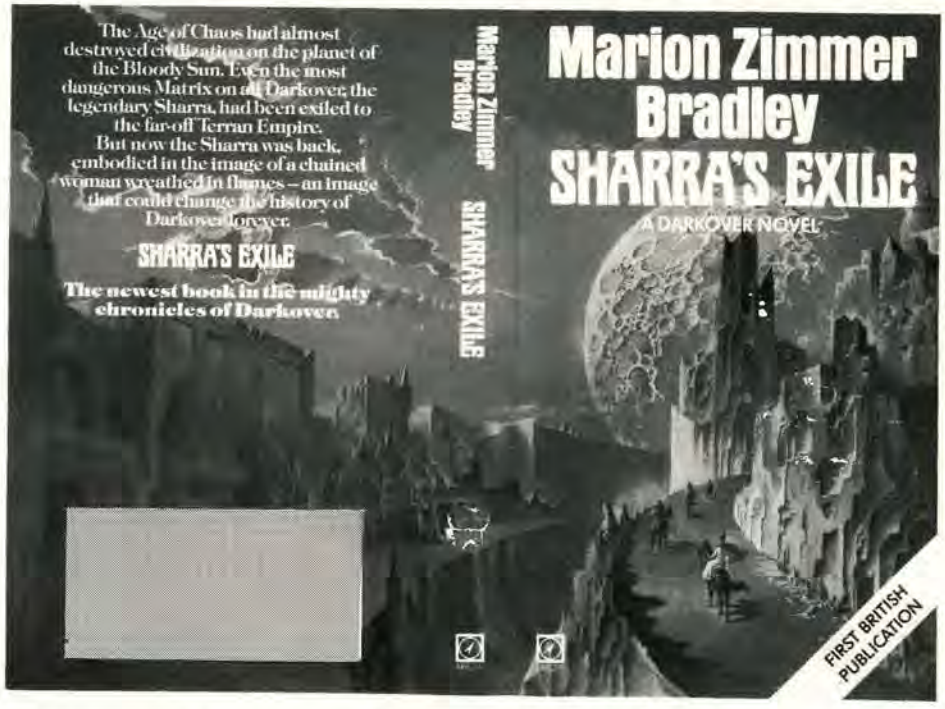
Book Review

Dave Pringle, editor of **Foundation: The Review of Science Fiction**, looks at recent releases in the world of adventure fiction and some interesting non-fiction.

There is a sub-species of science fiction which has been dubbed the *Planetary Romance*. You know the sort of thing: swashbuckling hero (or heroine), love interest, colourful alien backdrop — in short the Prisoner of Zenda meets Ayesha on Barsoom. Although Edgar Rice Burroughs may be the great progenitor, it is a category which has been dominated of late by female writers. One of the most serious and successful of these is Marion Zimmer Bradley, whose *Darkover* novels have been appearing since 1962. The first of these was a slim work called **The Sword of Aldones**. Now, completely rewritten and much fattened, it reappears as **Sharra's Exile** (Arrow, £1.95). Jewels and telepathy, a hierarchical society with elaborate protocol, obsessions with lineage and inheritance — all the familiar ingredients are here, mixed into a fine stew of anguish and action. It has very little to do with *science fiction*, as I understand the term, but with its elaborately detailed imaginary world it is no doubt full of inspiration for fantasy gamers.

The Process (Arrow, £1.75) is a prime cut of Norman Spinrad fiction, and probably his best book since **Bug Jack Barron** (1969). Spinrad fiction tends to come in large chunks, raw and dripping, and this novel is no exception. Written in the 70s, but just published here for the first time, The Process is about a science-fiction religion, Transformalism, which takes over people's lives in the most sinister way. The hero is a minor TV director, his wife an unsuccessful actress, while the villain is a one-time SF writer turned religious prophet. Which real-life cult leader has served Spinrad as a model? It won't take you long to guess. This is an angry book, full of ambition, frustration, and depictions of torrid sex. It is overwritten and overlong, as all Spinrad's novels are, but it packs an unavoidable punch.

J. G. Ballard's **Hello America** (Granada £1.50) is not one of his most successful books, although it does contain some beautiful images. By Ballard's standards, it is a piece of trad SF: in the 21st century America has become depopulated as a result of energy depletion and climatic changes. An expedition sets out from Europe to 'rediscover' America.... What they find is a typical Ballardian landscape of desert and jungle, inhabited by scattered tribes known as the Gays, the Divorcees, the Executives, and so on. None of this is to be taken very seriously on the SF level, for this is Ballard's first thorough-going attempt at a humorous novel — a satire on the American Dream, no less. The book builds to a manic climax, involving a mad 'President' who calls himself Charles Manson, before all is resolved in a lyrical happy ending. Enjoyable as much of this is, I found myself wishing that Ballard had gone further and made the work altogether more 'American' — not in a realistic sense, (because this is a novel about the media image of America rather than the real thing) but in a mythical sense. I feel Ballard could have got more of America into the book, but instead he has rested content with an entertaining two-finger exercise.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The Retreat from Liberty by Michael Moorcock (Zomba Books, £2.25) was published shortly before the General Election, and it may have swayed a few voters. It is a 95-page political pamphlet, an example of a very old genre which has recently come to the fore again with the writings of E.P.Thompson. In tone, such works are light-years distant from the calculated dishonesty of party manifestoes or the measured jargon of academic essays. Their aim is to convince us by wit, style, and above all *passion*. Moorcock takes an anarchist's point of view: he believes each of us should accept personal freedom and all the responsibilities that entails. Needless to say, the most entertaining parts of his polemic are those in which he attacks the 'enemies of freedom' — particularly Mrs Thatcher: 'I think she is living as rich a fantasy life as was ever granted a little suburban princess. Sometimes it looks as if Shirley Temple is running the country on the lines of a Kipling story....', and so on. This booklet is a must for all Moorcock fans, but I hope it is read by a much wider audience besides.

Brief mentions: **Red Dragon** by Thomas Harris (Corgi, £1.95) is an excellent thriller about a man who murders whole families with the aid of his grandmother's false teeth (I kid not). It comes with a jacket recommendation from Stephen King, and in this case I agree with him — Red Dragon is fine of its type. Mr King is also quoted on the flyleaf of **Psycho 2** by Robert Bloch (Corgi, £1.50), but this time I am afraid he is talking through his hat. Psycho 2 is in the same genre as Red Dragon (psychological/murder/horror), but it is much cruder and much less believable. Perhaps the forthcoming film will be an improvement.

Dave Pringle

Our thanks to Dave Pringle, who will be back in issue 7 to assess a new batch of fiction and non-fiction releases. Next month will see the return of Colin Greenland, who has the enviable job of reviewing some of the science fiction and fantasy type films currently on the circuits.

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LORE, LAY AND LEGEND~

Carole Morris *explores the mythology underlying adventure gaming*

The Celts are a difficult 'people' to pin down. This is perhaps because 'Celtic' is an adjective which more appropriately describes a language than a distinct identifiable people in Central and North West Europe in the thousand years before the birth of Christ.

We know of at least two distinct branches of Celtic-speaking linguistic groups in North West Europe — the Brythonic Celts whose language has come down to us as Welsh, Cornish and Breton, and the Goedelic Celts whose language survives as Irish and Scottish Gaelic. There are many references in Classical texts and also many place names today which show us that there were Celts in many parts of Europe, and just as widespread and diverse as the people were their legends, myths and religious beliefs.

Today we know about various nations' myths and legends because of the literature, oral traditions, religious buildings and sites, sculpture, inscriptions etc which they created. Our knowledge of the Celtic panoply of myths and gods is made up of information gleaned from all these sources, but especially from Irish and Welsh literature.

In this article, and in a later one, I hope to relate the myths and set the background for five of the deities and heroes included in the Celtic Mythos of the DEITIES & DEMIGODS™ Cyclopaedia (DDG). These five are Lugh, Cuchulain, Nuada, Mananan and Arawn. As will become clear, the accepted myths and AD&D™ characters differ greatly, but I will seek to compare the two and perhaps give players a little more knowledge about their deities or favourite heroes.

The literature of ancient Ireland contains a cycle of myths about the 'People of Dana' who appear to have been gods and legendary invaders of Ireland. Dana herself was a goddess, sometimes known as Brigit (p27 DDG) in Irish myth, and possibly the same as Brigantia in North Britain. The 'Danaans' came from four great cities — Falias, Gorias, Finias and Murias, and from each city they brought with them a magical treasure:

From Falias came the **Stone of Destiny** over which the High Kings of Ireland were crowned and which roared loudly at a rightful monarch's coronation. This stone is reputedly that which has come down to modern times as the Stone of Scone, now in Westminster Abbey. From Gorias came the **Sword of Lugh**, about which more later. From Finias came a **magical spear**; and from Murias came the **Cauldron of the Dagda** which could feed an infinity of men and never be emptied.

Lugh (pronounced *Loo*), the son of Kian, had many attributes; he was the sun god of the Celtic pantheon and his name can be traced in places such as Lyons, whose Roman name was Lugdunum or Fortress of Lugh. The legend of his birth echoes that of Perseus in Greek mythology:

Balor, the one-eyed king of the Fomorians (a huge, mis-shapen, violent and cruel people representing the power of evil), was told in a prophecy that he would die at his grandson's hands. Since his only child was a daughter, Ethlinn, he imprisoned her in a tower on a rocky headland with twelve matrons, and decreed she should never learn that men existed.

On the mainland, however, lived three brothers — Kian, Sawan and Gobin the Smith (cf Goebhnie p28 DDG). Kian had a magical cow which Balor had managed to steal by deception. In revenge, Kian disguised himself as a woman and with the help of a druidess he managed to reach Ethlinn, Balor's daughter, while the twelve matrons were sleeping under the druidess' enchantment. Some time later Ethlinn was delivered of three sons, and when he found out, Balor in anger and fear commanded that they be drowned in a whirlpool off the coast. One child fell into the sea while being carried out to the whirlpool, but the other two were duly killed. The druidess rescued the first son and carried it to Kian, whose brother the smith taught the child every craft and skill that existed. This child was Lugh — destined to be the greatest of the Danaans, the god of the sun, of all human knowledge and of every art and craft, and who would one day release the Danaans from the overlordship of the evil Fomorians.

In the DDG, Lugh is titled the 'god of generalities'. Perhaps this is a reference to the general nature of his attributes, and since as a deity he can use any one of the attributes of any being he has ever met (p28 DDG), he equates well with Lugh of Irish mythology.

One legend about Lugh tells how he came to the Palace of Nuada of the Silver Hand at Tara to offer his services. When the doorkeeper asked what he could do, 'carpentry' was the reply. The answer was that Nuada already had a carpenter. In vain Lugh offered the crafts of smith, poet, harpist, science and learning, physician, etc and always received the reply that Nuada had one already. Not deterred, Lugh asked if the king had any one man who could do every craft, and if so he would leave and never return. These amazing skills could not now be matched and Lugh was warmly welcomed at Tara as 'Ildanach' — the all-Craftsman. Another name by which he is known in legend is Lugh Lamfada, or Lugh of the Long Arm ('long-handed' in DDG).

Lugh brought many magical items with him to Ireland, among which were the **Boat of Mananan the Sea God** which could divine men's thoughts and would travel anywhere, the **Horse of Mananan** which could gallop alike over land and sea, and a magnificent sword called **'Fragarach' — 'the Answerer'** which cut through any armour, whatever its properties.

Lugh's never-failing craft and guile are shown to us again in the legend of the deliverance of the Danaans from the evil of King Balor and the Fomorians.

One year, the Fomorian envoys who had come for tribute were attacked and only nine men returned to Balor to relate this defiance. Lugh began to prepare the Danaans for the final battle by arranging the acquisition of many more magical items. Lugh's father Kian had been killed by the three sons of Turenn, and as the eric (or blood price) exacted for his death, Lugh sent the three brothers on a quest to bring back three apples from the Garden of the Sun, (NB the similarity to Hercules' quest to the Garden of the Hesperides), a magical pigskin which healed any wound or sickness if it was laid on the sufferer, a living and fiery magical spear, seven pigs which could be killed and eaten every night and become whole again next day, and the spit of the sea-nymphs of the undersea Island of Finchory.

These items proved invaluable in the battle with the Fomorians, and the victory would have been assured to the Danaans but for King Balor, whose gaze could kill anything. Lugh waited for the moment when Balor's eyelid drooped through tiredness and then hurled into his eye a massive stone which sank into his head and slew him. Thus, as the prophecy foretold, Balor was killed by the hand of his grandson.

Cuchulain (pronounced *Coo-hoolin*) was the mightest hero in all Celtic legend. He was the son of Lugh and Dectera, daughter of the druid Cathbad, and when he was born he was given by Dectera to the warriors of Ulster whom she had lured to the Fairy Mound of Nagus on the River Boyne. He was named Setanta and the druid Morann prophesied that '....charioteers and warriors, kings and sages will recount his deeds; he will win the love of many and avenge all wrongs' (NB in the DDG Cuchulain 'exists to fight giants and right wrongs all over the countryside').

When he was old enough, Setanta came to the court of King Conor of Ulster to be brought up with other princes and chieftain's sons. One day, when Conor and his nobles were going to a feast at the hall of Cullan, a wealthy smith, Setanta stayed behind to finish a game of hurley with his friends (this is probably the game of hurling, still played today). Night fell at the hall of Cullan, and the smith's huge and terrible hound was released to guard it. When Setanta arrived late at the hall, the dog attacked him as a stranger. Seizing it by the throat, Setanta killed it. Cullan was sorrowful at the death of his faithful hound, but Setanta promised to stand guard over his hall with sword and spear until he could train a new hound. The nobles henceforth called him Cuchulain, the Hound of Cullan.

There are many and varied legends about Cuchulain and his adventures, only some of which I shall relate here.

One of his earliest adventures was seeking out a woman warrior called Skatha, who dwelt over the sea in the 'Land of the Shadows'. She taught young warriors her skill at arms if she chose to. Cuchulain passed over the plains of Ill-Luck and their bottomless quagmires with the help of a magnificent fiery wheel sent by his father Lugh the Sun God in the guise of a young man. When Cuchulain came to a place called 'The Bridge of Leaps', he met many princes of Ireland, and among them his old friend Ferdia. The bridge was very narrow and high, and spanned a ravine with a raging sea full of sea monsters below. No-one could cross the bridge unless taught the secret by Skatha herself, for if someone stepped onto one end of the bridge, the middle would rear up and throw him back or into the sea. Cuchulain attempted three times to leap onto the bridge, and three times it threw him back. However, at the fourth leap he landed on the centre and then leapt over the other end to reach Skatha's castle. She marvelled at his courage and skill and accepted him as her pupil.

For a year and a day Cuchulain stayed with Skatha and learned everything she could teach him, especially how to use the dreadful spear 'Gae Bolg' — 'Belly Spear' which had to be thrown with the foot. If it wounded an enemy (normally in the stomach) it filled every part of him with its barbs (in the DDG this spear is made from a sea dragon's bones).

Before he left Skatha, Cuchulain captured and subdued Princess Aifa — one of Skatha's mortal enemies and the fiercest woman warrior who ever lived. She bore him a son (after he had left the Land of Shadows) and on his father's instructions she charged the lad Connla under geis never to turn away from anyone, never to refuse a fight and never to reveal his identity (NB in Irish legend, the law of geis (pronounced *gaysh*) was a bond, a spell, a magical taboo which every person had peculiar to himself and must not transgress). Connla, however, was also charged to seek out his father in Ulster when a golden ring which Cuchulain had given to Aifa would fit on his finger.

Years later, Connla approached the shore of Ulster in a boat of bronze with golden oars, and amazed King Conor and his lords by bringing down live seabirds with his sling, and other terrifying feats of prowess. When the King, in fear, commanded Connla to leave, he refused, and then defeated all the warriors sent against him. Cuchulain was sent for, and when he could not persuade the lad to reveal his land or lineage, the two began to fight each other, and in the course of the fight, fell into the sea. Cuchulain was drowning when he managed to spear Connla with the magical Gae Bolg. As his son was dying, Cuchulain saw the ring on Connla's finger, and then sorrowfully carried his son before the King and all the lords of Ulster before he died. Connla was the only son Cuchulain ever had.

Cuchulain is usually portrayed as an ordinary mortal, but his godlike character was revealed when he entered into what legends call his 'battle-fury'. He would grow in stature and kill all around him in an ecstatic craze of beserker-like frenzy. His strength became superhuman and his appearance terrifying. The DDG tells how in battle Cuchulain 'shines with a brilliance that makes it impossible for his mortal enemies to look directly at him'.

One of the lords of Ulster was Briccriu Poisoned-Tongue, who delighted in creating strife between people. Once he invited the king and all his heroes and warriors to a feast and challenged them to find amongst them the champion of all Ireland. It was agreed that the contest should be between Conall, Laery and Cuchulain, and a terrible demon should be summoned from the bottom of a lake to judge the contest. The demon then set a

test of courage which involved any of them cutting off the demon's head that day, and then laying down his own head for the axe on the next day! Cuchulain alone accepted the challenge and cut off the demon's head. The demon disappeared into the lake carrying his head and the axe. The next day arrived, and Cuchulain duly laid his head on the block. Swinging the axe three times over his victim, the demon brought down his axe on the block, and then bade Cuchulain get up alive, the bravest of all, and Champion of all Ireland.

I shall pass on here to the saddest legend of all, and one which leaves us with no comfort that every story has a happy ending. This is concerned with the death of Cuchulain:

The greatest enemies of the land of Ulster were King Ailell and Queen Maev of Connacht, and the queen was a powerful, terrible woman whose will was law in Connacht. She once caused the hosts of Connacht and its allies to rise up and go to war with Ulster just to steal the Brown Bull of Quelgny — a fabulous beast which had a back broad enough for 50 children to play on, and who could stamp down on a man and drive him 30 feet into the ground! During this war, the Curse of Macha, which was a mighty curse fated to fall upon the men of Ulster at the time of their greatest need, was invoked and rendered them 'as helpless as women in labour for five days and nights'. Only Cuchulain, as the son of a god, was not affected by the curse. He stood his ground at the ford of the River Dee on the southern border of the Plain of Murthemney (which was his own land), and fought with the champions of Connacht one at a time in an attempt to prevent the host overcoming Ulster. (NB in the DDG Cuchulain is said to appear when all hope is lost.) It was in one of these single combats that Cuchulain slew his lifelong friend Ferdia whose land was an ally of Connacht. He killed him with the spear Gae Bolg. In another combat Cuchulain despatched the 'Sons of Calatin', a creature made up of the 27 sons of Calatin the wizard and the wizard himself.

Sualtam, the mortal 'father' of Cuchulain eventually managed to rouse the men of Ulster from Macha's Curse, and in the final battle of Garach, Ulster came out victorious. Ailell and Maev sued for peace for seven years, although Maev swore she would be avenged on Cuchulain and eventually cause his death for the shame he had brought on her and Connacht. She arranged that the remaining six evil misshapen progeny of Calatin the wizard should cause madness to take over Cuchulain's mind so that he saw phantoms and imaginary scenes. In one of these he saw the corpse of his wife Emer thrown from the ramparts of the royal fortress at Emain Macha. When he eventually found Emer alive and well at their home at Murthemney, Cuchulain bade farewell to her, to his mother Dectera and to the druid Cathbad and despite all their entreaties he went to meet the host of Connacht which was again advancing on Ulster. In his battle frenzy he slew hundreds and left the plain strewn with enemy dead.

Then a bard in the enemy camp demanded Cuchulain's spear. It was a point of honour in ancient Ireland never to refuse anything to a bard, and so three times Cuchulain handed over his spear. (NB DDG says that none but Cuchulain could wield Gae Bolg.) The first time it was thrown back it hit Laeg, Cuchulain's charioteer. The second time it struck the Grey of Macha, one of Cuchulain's chariot horses. Both Laeg and the Grey bade farewell to Cuchulain and Laeg died. The third time the spear was thrown back it struck Cuchulain in the stomach and mortally wounded him. He lashed himself to a pillar stone by the loch so that he would not die lying down, and as he was dying the Grey of Macha came to protect him, as the host of Connacht closed in.

Lewy, son of Curoi, reached Cuchulain and cut off his head, but as the sword fell from Cuchulain's hand it smote off Lewy's hand. In vengeance Lewy cut off Cuchulain's hand and with his head, marched in triumph to Tara. There was no triumph in Ulster, however, for Setanta Cuchulain, the Hound of Ulster, would fight no more.

Carole Morris

...letters...letters...letters

I think Gary can defend his own creation more successfully than anyone here ever could – he did so very cogently at GamesFair '83 – so we'll wait for him to answer, or indeed, for any other reader to respond to the barbarian class, rather than make specific defence ourselves.

But Derrick has raised an interesting point, indirectly, about 'official' and 'unofficial' rules, and other correspondants have widened the debate.

Pete Tamlyn, Aylesbury: One major disagreement between TSR and the sort of RPG player who reads **the Acolyte** is over rules. Many readers are of the opinion that rules are not important. It is the GM and the players who make or break a game, and the duty of rules is for them to be as unobtrusive as possible. However, the perceived TSR policy is that rules are very important because RPGs are games and players can only be good if they know the rules well enough to play their characters to the limits of their abilities. In short, the TSR view is that an RPG is a competitive game with set rules in which it is possible to do 'better' through a better command of the rules. Our view is that an RPG is a form of entertainment in which copious rules detract from the atmosphere the GM is trying to engender. A good player is one who plays a recognisable and consistent character.

Pete Birks, London SW9: 'A Box For The Margrave' worked quite well. Since I am neither a player nor a DM I had no hesitation in reading the lot, but I think you showed a touching naivety believing that where the rules are 'commercially available' the players will gentlemanly decline to read the rules. In a recent argument in a postal **En Garde!** game one player stated that if rules are published for the public eye, there can be nothing morally wrong with him reading them and using them to his own advantage.

Against the spirit of RPG? Possibly?

Definitely. RPG players can sound like TV-football watchers – 'Don't tell me the score! I want to enjoy the game!' Most recognise that what seems an advantage in Pete's terms is utterly detrimental to the game. Why? Perhaps it has something to do with the 'spirit' of role-playing?

Many correspondants over the last year stressed that they hoped IMAGINE™ magazine would not be a vehicle for the endless propagation of 'new' and 'alternative' rules for RPG systems. We agreed, and our editorial policy initially laid some emphasis on our wish to avoid this style. Now that material such as the Barbarian class has appeared, some people say we have welched on our commitment. Perhaps we need to draw our lines afresh.

The 'spirit' of role-playing is not enshrined in any rules – hence the school of thought that says rules are an evil to be suffered on the way to true role-playing. But when players create a campaign that draws on 'house rules' and rejects certain official conventions, they are still reacting to the existence of the rules in the first place. We publish the new rules because we want to give players a chance to choose whether to accept or reject them.

more follows ›

Sewars 12 brings the first Page Three Ghoul to fanzinedom. FRP ideas, news and reviews for 60p from Chris Baylis, 12 The Fryth, Basildon, Essex.

Greatest Hits 107 justifies the 2nd Best Lettercolumn Gladys with an enormous selection of mail. Also contains Reviews and Diplomacy, £2 for 5 issues. Contact Pete Birks, 39 Handforth Road, LONDON SW9 0LL.

Lots of letters too in **Acolyte 47**, where, in addition to news, game reports and Designing Role-Playing Games Part 1.45×10^7, Pete Tamlyn also holds forth for three pages on all things religious and magical. Hmmm.... Another 40p special in two halves from 6 Broughton Close, Bierton, Aylesbury, Bucks. HP22 5DJ.

Walamalaysia Gazette 30 did not print a review of IMAGINE™ magazine. Nor a lot else other than Diplomacy reports. And if Dave Thorby won't print his address, nor will I.

Not The Latest Zine. Does anybody remember **Pssst!**? Well, one ex-Pssst star, Paul Gravett is behind **Escape 1**, a comic strip magazine — ooops, no, a Bande Dessinee UK. Lots of material for 95p, but not as slick as its fore-runner. Try it anyway, from 156 Munster Road, Fulham SW6.

And sadly, we have to announce that **Thunderstruck** has folded, since Tim Kalvis is sitting his 11+, or PhD, or something. Will he resurface at a later date? Watch this space.

Paul Cockburn

Clubs & Hobbymeets

If you wish to advertise a club or hobbymeet through these pages, just write to IMAGINE magazine with details.

Starting with the most northerly, we had a letter from Wallace Nicoll of the **Glasgow** (postal games) hobbymeet, telling us that some of the details we printed in # 2 were out of date. Apparently it takes place from 8.15pm on the *fourth* Thursday each month at The Overflow, on the corner of Old Dumbarton Road and Yorkhill Street, ie at the back of Kelvin Hall. Details from Wallace at 12 Flenders Ave, Clarkston, Glasgow G76 7XZ. He recommends the beer and says 'We discuss FRP, postal games, life, the universe and everything. We don't denigrate ourselves by actually PLAYING games....'.

Gamers in **Newcastle** might like to contact Richard Gooch, 45 Keverne Square, Kenton Bar, Newcastle NE5 3YF, for details of hobbymeets which take place at the Pig and Whistle, Cloth Market/Groat Market, 1st market, and at the Mountbatten Bars next to Newcastle Central Station on the Friday fortnight after the Pig and Whistle meet.

Coventry dwellers should contact Nick Kinzett (11 Daleway Road, Green Lane, Coventry CV3 6JF) if they want to attend the meet at The Rocket on Warwick Road, just outside Coventry station. Apparently this takes place on the last Monday of the month, but as the dates have changed recently we suggest you check up first.

You might find Brian Dolton (of *Tavern Talk* fame) at The Avenue pub on Shaftesbury Avenue, **London** (near Leicester Square tube station) on any Friday which coincides with a Lokasenna deadline —if the pub is still standing! Contact Brian to find out: Hades, 94 Waddington Ave, Old Coulsdon, Coulsdon, Surrey CR3 1QN.

Also in London, the original hobbymeet which inspired all the others takes place at The Lamb on Lambs Conduit Street (near Russell Square tube station) on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month on the left hand side of the bar.

South again. We have a different contact name for the **Devon** meet. It is still at The Puffing Billy, Exton, on the main Exeter-Exmouth road on the 3rd Friday each month, but you should contact Rob Chapman, 7 Baymount, Paignton, Devon TQ3 2LD.

Finally, anyone going to the Continent for their holiday might contact Michel Liesnard, editor of *Chatecler*, for details of a meet which takes place at Taverne de la Bascule in Brussells. Michel's address is Rue Albert de Latour 59 (Bte 10), B-1030 Bruxelles, Belgium.

letters....letters....letters....

is reduced to talking about banal pub games in a car (could this mean new rules for Car Wars?).

Perhaps I could give a few tips to newcomers. Having bought the five AD&D™ game books and all the modules I could, I found this left little finance or time to buy figures. Happily I discovered a series of cardboard players (*players?*) and monsters. There are sets of dungeon mapping cards, a set which includes furniture and boats and some cave flooring boards. Personally I use a canvas sheet from an old roller-type blackboard for caves — it rolls up into a 6' long tube and is also useful if you haven't got time to lay out a dungeon plan.

If you need a village, Usborne Publishing have a nice do-it-yourself cut-out card village and castle. Both look superb when constructed.

Interesting idea, but I'm worried about encouraging classroom vandalism. Isn't it bad enough that someone is trying to get us into trouble with our parent company?

T Irons, Heswall, Merseyside: Congratulations on issues 1 and 2. The scenarios and Dispel Confusion are excellent (could such standards be applied to the TSR modules which often contain inconsistencies).

Finally, we owe an apology to the editors of ***Mad Dog****, for omitting to state their address (given below) when we reviewed the 'zine in # 3:*

Chris Brasted, 78 Oxford Ave, Southampton: Thanks for lumping Mad Dog in with the 'riff-raff'. To be honest.... we're quite pleased to appear in the same column as Acolyte and Greatest Hits.

As to the accusation of limp stories and fudgy art — fair enough, but if you want slick, shallow stories and Marvel-clone artwork, that's not where we want to go — there are other ways of creating comic strips.

Forthcoming Events

If you've read about the 15th official Star Trek convention, then you're bound to want details of the *next* one. Well, you haven't long to wait — **Triple C**, the 16th convention, takes place on the weekend of 26-29th August at the Grand Hotel, Birmingham (nr the Royal Angus Hotel). Registration costs £13.00 for adults or £6.50 for under 12s for the weekend, or £6.00 and £3.00 respectively for one day attendance. For more details, write to Chris Chivers, 39 Nelson Street, Gloucester GL1 4QX, enclosing an SAE.

Following that, there's **Unicon** on 2-4th September at the University of Essex. Details appeared in last month's IMAGINE magazine, so suffice it to say that enquiries (and offers to run FRP games!) should be addressed to the organisers at 17 Laing Road, Colchester, Essex.

While at Sol III, we picked up details of **Mythcon**, which will take place on 16-18th September, again at the Grand Hotel, Birmingham (nr the Royal Angus Hotel). There will be a D&D competition as well as guests of honour, videos, a dealers room and the usual attractions. Send an SAE to Tony Buck, 158 West Way, Raynes Park, London SW20 8LS for a registration form.

Unfortunately, this year's **Games Day**, at the Royal Horticultural Hall, London, is going to clash with **Northern Militaire** in Manchester and **Novacon 13** at the Royal Angus Hotel, Birmingham (nr the Grand Hotel), so you will have to choose between them on 5-6th November. We hope to have details of all three in the next issue of IMAGINE magazine.

Lastly, November 11-13 will be the date for **Midcon** which hosts the National Diplomacy Tournament. Details from Chris Tringham, 204 Beulah Hill, London SE19 3UX if you send 30p and an SAE.

HIT THE TREASURE TRAIL

Flying Buffalo, distributors of Tunnels & Trolls in the UK, have just announced a fantastic new competition open to games players of all ages. Entry to **The Tunnels & Trolls Twenty Minute Treasure Trail** is free: the entry form and components are contained inside a new mini-game called (— you've guessed it!) **Treasure Trail**, which costs 35p.

The first prize is £200 worth of games of the winner's choice and a trip to London Games Day at Flying Buffalo's expense, where it is hoped the prize will be presented by Ken St Andre, inventor of Tunnels and Trolls. There are also 50 runners up prizes of complete sets of the Tunnels & Trolls role-playing game.

The Twenty Minute Treasure Trail is the first ever competition of its kind, designed to provide a real challenge to games players. Its originators are confident that it will be a real brain teaser even to the most experienced role-players.

Closing date for entries is October 22nd.

Treasure Trail is available from local games shops and retailers all over the country — but if your local shop does not have it in stock, write to Flying Buffalo, PO Box 100, Bath St, WALSALL, W Midlands, for further advice. Or write to this magazine: we will gladly pass on all enquiries.

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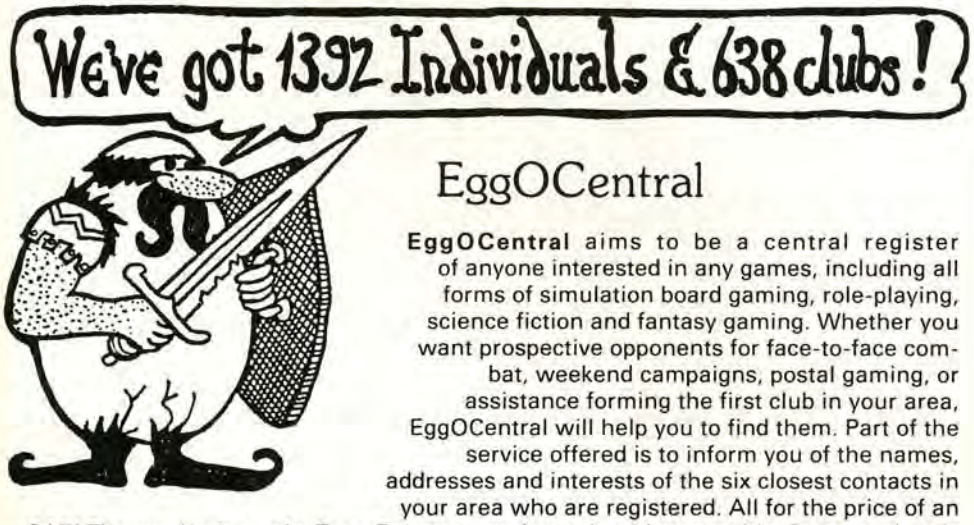
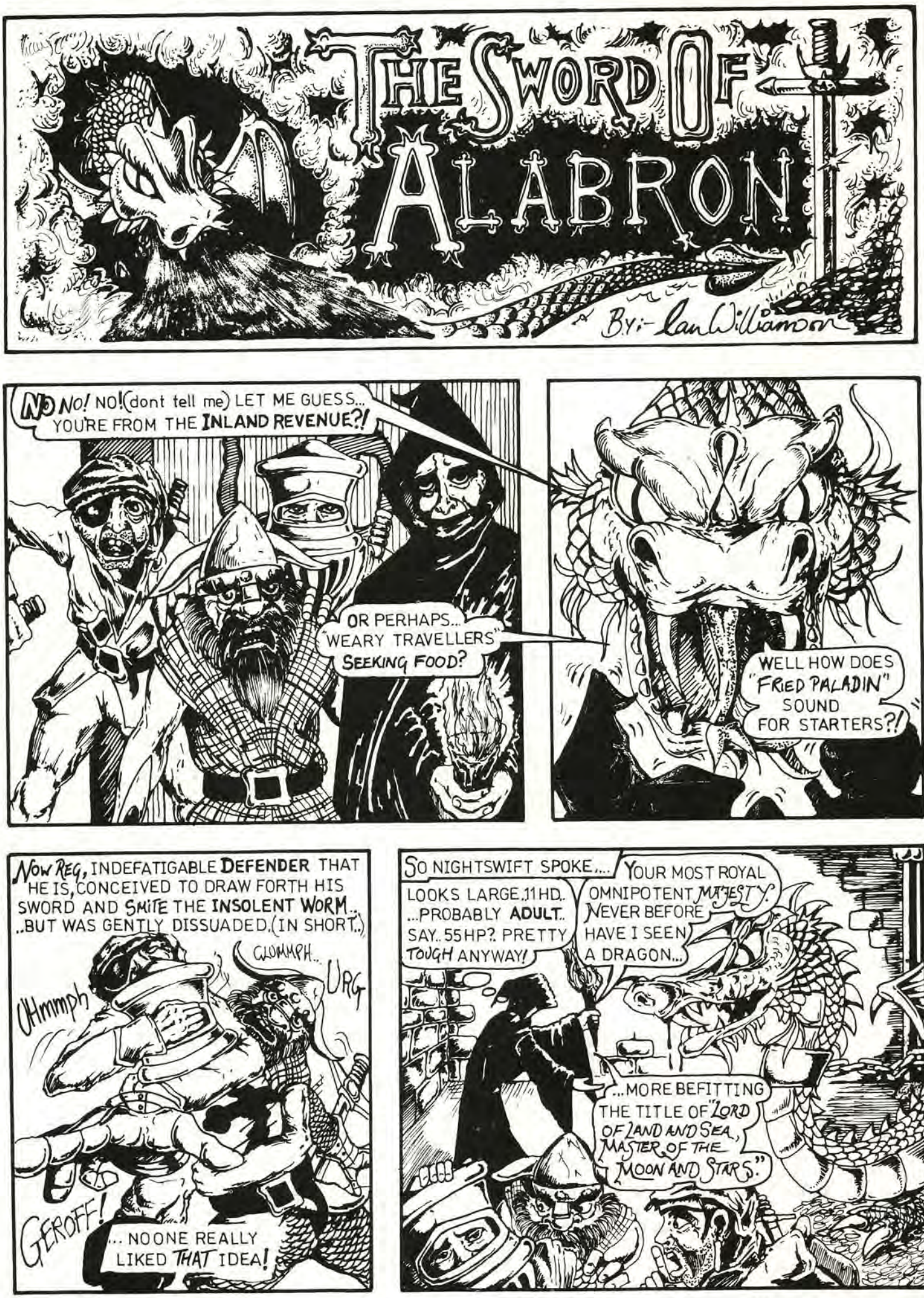


EggOCentral

EggOCentral aims to be a central register of anyone interested in any games, including all forms of simulation board gaming, role-playing, science fiction and fantasy gaming. Whether you want prospective opponents for face-to-face combat, weekend campaigns, postal gaming, or assistance forming the first club in your area, EggOCentral will help you to find them. Part of the service offered is to inform you of the names, addresses and interests of the six closest contacts in your area who are registered. All for the price of an SAE! The service is run by Terry Devereux and you should contact him for more details at: EggOCentral, 32 Windmill Lane, Southall, Middlesex UB2 4ND. Don't forget the SAE!


THE SWORD OF ALABRON
By:- Ian Williamson
NO NO! NO! (dont tell me) LET ME GUESS... YOU'RE FROM THE INLAND REVENUE?!
OR PERHAPS... WEARY TRAVELLERS SEEKING FOOD?
WELL HOW DOES "FRIED PALADIN" SOUND FOR STARTERS?!
NOW REG, INDEFATIGABLE DEFENDER THAT HE IS, CONCEIVED TO DRAW FORTH HIS SWORD AND SMITE THE INSOLENT WORM.. ..BUT WAS GENTLY DISSUADED. (IN SHORT..)
GLUMMPH..
URG
UHmmph
GEROFF!
... NOONE REALLY LIKED THAT IDEA!
SO NIGHTSWIFT SPOKE....
LOOKS LARGE..11HD.. ...PROBABLY ADULT.. SAY..55HP?. PRETTY TOUGH ANYWAY!
YOUR MOST ROYAL OMNIPOTENT MAJESTY. NEVER BEFORE HAVE I SEEN A DRAGON...
...MORE BEFITTING THE TITLE OF "LORD OF LAND AND SEA, MASTER OF THE MOON AND STARS."

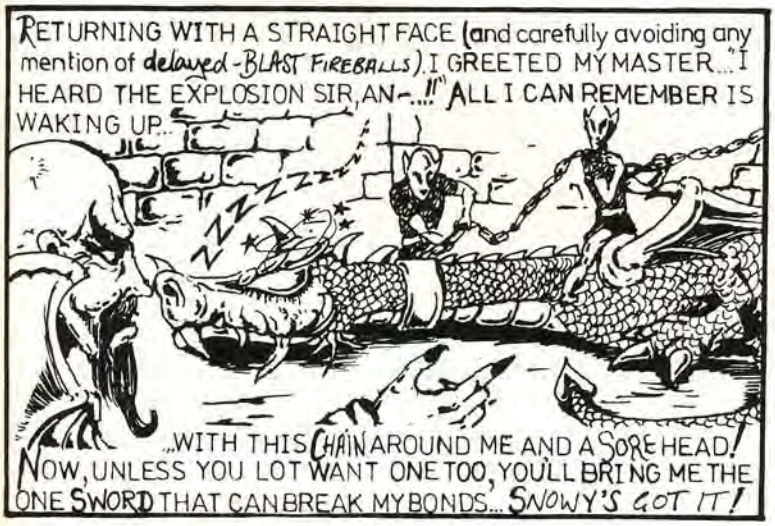
HOW MUCH WERE YOU "RIPPED OFF" FOR THE SPEECH GANDALF!?
M-MY N-N-name is Nightswift, y-YOUR DRAGONSH-SHIP... ...AND THE-er fee was.....
..t.. 2,000 GP.. Sir.
2,000?! THE CON-ARTIST!..
..I SOLD IT TO HIM FOR 500!!
(THATS ONE DEAD SCRIBE WHEN I SEE HIM!)
ANYWAY, STOP CRAWLING AND LISTEN! I'VE A SMALL TASK FOR YOU SCUM.

KNOW THEN... WHEN ZURON THUNDER FIRST BUILT THIS TOWER...
...HE SENT OUT SCOUTS TO SCOUR THE LAND IN SEARCH OF GREAT GENERALS.
TWO PRINCES CAME... "PRINCES OF EXTREME NAUGHTINESS..." YOU'D SAY."

I WAS ONE, SNOWDEMON WAS THE OTHER. ALTHOUGH STILL YOUNG WE WERE ASSIGNED...
LAST ONE UP IS FIRST ON THE MENU...
...COMMAND OF THE HELLGUARD AND THE GRIFFON WARD. THESE WERE THUNDERS ARMIES.

THE VALLEY OF PYRANTHOR...
..TWO MORE THEN I'LL BREAK FOR LUNCH..
..WAS MY PATROL, WHILE "SNOWY" WATCHED HIS MASTERS' GOLD!

ONE FATEFUL DAY, HOWEVER, A MASSIVE "EXPLOSION," SHOOK THE COUNTRYSIDE, LAYING WASTE THE NEARBY CITY OF MOORGRAVE
BA-
ROOM
YOU.. YOU... AND YOU... ARE ALL FIRED!
..AND (ER) OLAF? SEE WE HAVE NEW KITCHEN STAFF BY NEXT WEDNESDAY... THERES A GOOD DJINNI!
I ALMOST SPLIT MY SIDES LAUGHING! JUST WHAT THEY DESERVED, I THOUGHT, (calling a city MOORGRAVE) BUT WHAT OF KRELL TOWER?!


RETURNING WITH A STRAIGHT FACE (and carefully avoiding any mention of delayed-BLAST FIREBALLS). I GREETED MY MASTER... "I HEARD THE EXPLOSION SIR, AN-...!!" ALL I CAN REMEMBER IS WAKING UP..
..WITH THIS CHAIN AROUND ME AND A SORE HEAD! NOW, UNLESS YOU LOT WANT ONE TOO, YOU'LL BRING ME THE ONE SWORD THAT CAN BREAK MY BONDS... SNOWY'S GOT IT!

AN "ORDINARY" LITTLE BLADE, NOTHING LESS THAN A "JAZZED-UP" DAGGER REALLY! IT'S NO USE TO YOU, (honest) BUT TO ME ....
..IT IS EVERYTHING! I TRUST YOU WONT FAIL?

YOU CAN RELY ON US...YOUR DRAGONSHIP
OH I DO HOPE SO...YOU SEE I DISLIKE WASTING BREATHE WEAPONS ON ANYTHING BELOW 10th LEVEL!
SO GET OUT! BEFORE I CHANGE MY EXCEPTIONALLY INTELLIGENT MIND!
B-B-BUT YOUR LORDSHIP, MAY I HUMBLY ASK HOW WE'LL RECOGNISE A BLADE OF SUCH...INSIGNIFICANCE
OH YES (sorry; my mistake) ITS THE ONE SURROUNDED BY THE BRIGHT BLUE AURA...
ALL WELL
...IN THE CENTRE OF THE HALL AND SOME "ORC" ALSO SCRATCHED HIS NAME ON IT, IF IT HELPS... ALBARON (-or something?)
IT HELPS!..YOU SCHEMING WORM.
THANKS!
AND AT A SAFER DISTANCE..
HUH! SEE HOW I TRICKED HIM INTO BELIEVING WE'D BLUNDERED IN UNAWARES...
...AND HOW I SUBTLY GAINED THE NECESSARY INFORMATION ON THE SWORD OF ALABRON!
...AND ALL ALONG I FOOLISHLY BELIEVED THAT YOU'D JUST MADE A "BIG MISTAKE!"
BUT....
WHAT A BUNCH OF MUGS! THEY'LL BELIEVE ANYTHING IN THIS GAME!
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA
CLICK CLICK
NEXT THE ORC PATROL
NO,..NOT ME REG! ONCE I SAW THAT CHAIN I KNEW HE WAS HELPLESS...I MEAN, ONCE ONE HAS FOUGHT TIAMAT THEY'RE ALL EASY..
...THOU HAST MET TIAMAT?!
(well, only in "CAVERNS & KOBOLDS" i admit...but)
FUST ITS A SWORD..NOO ITS A WEE DAGGER AN' ALL I WANT.
..IS A DRAGEN-HEAD TAE HANG ON M'WALL! I'LL BE BACK TAE SEE YOO DRAGEN!

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